

Harry Potter and the Amulet of Time

**Book 3 – The Wolf and the Pelican**

Chapter One – Are We Home Yet?

With a flash and a \*pop\* the four students arrived once more in a deserted Great Hall. Looking around, they could see the House tables were all set up ready for the students to arrive, but none of the teachers were anywhere in sight.

“ Well, this is familiar,” Hermione stated, thinking back to the year before when they arrived to an equally empty Hall.

“ Yeah, it is. I wonder what time we’re in. Do you think we’re home yet?”

“ I doubt it, Ron. I think we’ll have to wait at least another year.”

“ Well, why don’t we go up to Dumbledore’s office? He’s sure to be there, and I want to see him surprised,” Ginny suggested.

When everyone nodded, the group picked up their trunks and followed Harry to the nearest wall. Placing his hand there, he created a door into his room. Once inside, they looked around to see if it looked the same as when they had left. A few alterations had been made, such as the furniture being moved and a few extra pictures on the walls. The four dropped their trunks on the floor and headed over to look at the pictures. Harry was the first one there, and gasped at what he saw.

“ Oh sweet Merlin, that’s Minh and Eustace. It’s their wedding.”

“ What! They got married?” Ginny exclaimed.

“ It would seem so. Look, there’s more. A few of their wedding day, and their last years here at Hogwarts. They look so old.”

“ They will do, Harry. They were twelve when we left, and in these pictures they’re adults.”

“ I know, ‘Mione, but it just seems weird.”

“ Yeah, I know. Hey, look at this one. It has Minh holding a baby.”

Ron pointed to a moving photograph of a grinning Eustace and a smiling Minh, holding a small baby wrapped in a blue blanket in her arms. Underneath, written in silver ink, was the inscription ‘The Potters with baby James, 1960’.

“ That’s my dad. Minh’s my grandmother. It never occurred to me before. I remember Lolide telling me I must have elven blood in my ancestry to be able to do elven magic so well, but I never thought about where it would come from.”

“ That means little Gaerwyn you met 1000 years ago is your great grandmother,” Hermione pointed out. Harry groaned and put his face in his hands.

“ I don’t know if I can even think about that. It’s making my head spin. This time travelling thing is really getting confusing.”

“ You’re only just getting confused? Lucky you. I’ve been confused from the beginning.”

“ I’m sure you haven’t, Ron.”

“ I have, Gin. I can’t get my head around it.”

“ Um, guys? I think we should get to Dumbledore’s office. The students will start arriving in a couple of hours, and we still don’t know when we are.”

“ Good point, let’s go.”

Hermione went over to her luggage and let Crookshanks out so he could roam around for a bit. She didn’t like keeping him locked up for too long. Ron did the same with Pig, telling him to go up to the owlery. When they were ready, Harry put his hand on the wall and asked for the headmaster’s office. This was a feature he had added just before they left 1944. Before, they would leave the room and come out of a door in a corridor near the entrance to the Gryffindor

common room. Now they could specify where they wanted a door to appear. Harry hadn't told Dumbledore about it yet, as he was hoping to surprise him. When he pulled the new door open, he stepped though into the round office, the others right behind him. The headmaster was sitting at his desk and looked up, startled, when they stepped in the room. Giving them a puzzled look, the four were amused when comprehension hit him and his eyes suddenly widened.

"You're back!"

"Yes we are, Professor," Harry said.

"Well, it's been a while. I was wondering when you were going to turn up again."

"Actually Professor, could you tell us when we are, please?" Ginny asked a little sheepishly.

"Of course. It's September 1st, 1975."

"Really? Then that means my parents will be here..."

"In their fifth year, right Harry?"

"Yeah Ron, I think so."

"Ah, you'll be talking about our young James Potter, and from your alias last year, am I right in assuming Miss Lily Evans?"

"That's right sir. Did Minh and Eustace really get married?"

"Indeed they did. I officiated, actually. The whole Order was there. Why don't you sit down and we'll discuss things."

The four took seats in front of Dumbledore's desk. As soon as he sat down, Harry felt a gentle weight resting on his shoulder. Looking up, his eyes were met by those of a beautiful phoenix. Harry lifted his hand and ran his fingers lightly over the feathered head. Fawkes let out a trill of phoenix song in contentment. Tuning his attention back to the headmaster, the boy continued to stroke the bird as it fluttered into his lap.

“ Now, since you left quite a few things have happened. Grindelwald's apprentice has become the new Dark Lord. He calls himself...”

“ Voldemort.”

“ You've heard of him?”

“ We've met.”

“ Really? And he didn't kill you?”

“ He tried. And failed. Five times.”

“ Five!?”

“ Yes, but I'm not prepared to elaborate. It could change time.”

“ Very well, then. As you probably know, then, he has a number of followers called...”

“ Death Eaters.”

“ Yes, Harry. Death Eaters. He marks them with...”

“ A Dark Mark.”

“ Yes. Is there anything I need to tell you?”

“ A few things, but it might be easier to tell you what we know, and you can fill in the blanks.”

“ Alright, then Harry. Go ahead.”

“ Voldemort, formerly known as Tom Marvolo Riddle, Head Boy and Slytherin student, is the self proclaimed Dark Lord. He is a half blood, his father being a Muggle and his mother a witch. Calls himself the heir of Slytherin, as he is a parselmouth, and this has been proven by a self updating genealogy book of the founders' bloodlines we found while looking up the Ravenclaw line. His aims are to rid the world of 'Mudbloods and Muggle scum'. He does this through his followers, the Death Eaters. Each Death Eater has a Dark Mark in its original

form on his or her left forearm. His followers are called to meetings by pain in their marks. He got the idea and incantation for the Dark Mark in 1944, when I branded one into his arm at the final battle. His primary objective is to take over control of the wizarding world. How am I doing so far?"

" Well, it would seem, Harry, that you know more than me. You gave him the Dark Mark?"

" It was a matter of continuity. I have the only book I know of that documents the Dark Mark. In our time, he uses them on his followers. He had to learn it from somewhere. Also, there is a little known fact that will play a huge part in the future."

" And what is that?"

" You can't kill the one who marked you. Meaning that none of the Order can kill me or you, as ours are the controlling marks. As I created yours, I can control all of those created by you. This means I can summon anyone who joined the Order after 1944, as I hold the first mark. Yours was changed a little so you could summon those marked by me, but mine holds all of the power. The same goes for Voldie. I marked him, so he can't kill me. He marked his Death Eaters, so they can't kill him. However, I am again the one in control, so I control the Death Eaters through him."

" My head's spinning."

" Sorry, Ron. It's a little hard to follow."

" You're telling me."

" So Harry," Dumbledore interrupted, " What don't you know about this time?"

" Well, all I do know is that my parents and godfather are at school now, as well as my potions professor and school rival's father. Voldie is in power, and wreaking havoc, and the Order should be actively fighting him."

“ Well, that’s about all you should know. One thing I find surprising, though, is that you call him by his name. You even give him a nickname. Most people refer to him as ‘You-Know-Who’ or ‘He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named’, as they are too afraid to call him by his real name.”

“ Sir, fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself. If we are afraid to name him, it makes us more afraid of the real thing. I find this idea idiotic.”

“ I fully agree, Harry. Well put.”

“ Sir, what happened to all of our friends?” Ginny asked.

“ Well, as you know, Eustace and Minh married and had a son, James. Both are Order members. Minh helps Poppy Pomfrey in the hospital wing, so you will be able to see her soon, and Eustace is an auror. As for Peeves and Lady Ravenclaw, they are still about the castle. I’m sure you’ll run into them soon enough.”

“ That’s good. Sir, we’re near our time now. There are a lot of people we know in the future, and knew in the past. How are we going to get around being recognised?”

“ That’s an excellent point, Miss Granger. I suggest we call an Order meeting right away. You will be rejoining, I assume?”

“ Of course Headmaster,” Harry said.

“ That’s good. Everyone, bar the ghosts, who knew you well in 1944, is either a member of the Order or a member of the Death Eaters. The Death Eaters won’t be a problem, because you will not see them much, if at all. The Order members include some of your current teachers. Everyone else you knew, especially those in other years, are off living their own lives and will never be any the wiser. As for looking like relatives, I don’t think that will be a problem.”

Looking at the four, Dumbledore knew he was right. Hermione was a muggleborn, so she wouldn’t look like anyone at Hogwarts. The Weasleys looked a little like Arthur, but Ginny especially looked more

like her mother. Despite the Weasley hair, no-one would be likely to make the connection. As for Harry, he looked rather different from his father. Having seen pictures of Harry when he was younger, Dumbledore knew that as he matured he looked a lot more like his mother. The fact that he had short spiked hair and no glasses made him look even less like James. *No*, he thought, *they won't be recognised*.

“ I think you will be fine as you are, except you will have to change your surnames again, except for you, Miss Granger. Harry, the only suggestion I would make would be to place a concealing charm on your scar. It is the only thing that makes you stand out, and if people see it, it may cause trouble in the future.”

“ Alright, I see your point,” Harry said as he waved his hand, concealing his scar.

“ Now, before we summon the Order, what are we doing about school for you four? You'll be in your sixth year, but what Houses are you in this time? I know you're trying different ones, so where am I putting you?”

“ Well, Ron's Gryffindor, Hermione's Hufflepuff, Ginny's Ravenclaw and I'm Slytherin.”

“ Very well, Harry. I'll make the announcements at the feast. Would you like to do the honours of calling the Order?”

Nodding his head, Harry felt for the connection of the Order marks and sent out a summons. Once he knew everyone was coming, he turned to thinking about the new school year and what it would be like to see his parents. As his musings turned to the Marauders, a sudden thought struck him.

“ Oh, Merlin,” he said with a groan.

“ What's wrong, Harry?”

“ I'm a Slytherin, Ron.”

“ You have my sympathy, mate.”

“ It’s not that.”

“ What is it, then?”

“ What are my parents going to say?”



## Chapter Two – Remember Us?

As soon as all of the arrangements for school had been made, the four time travellers and Dumbledore headed into Harry's room, from where they took a pinch of floo powder each and threw it into the fireplace. Calling out their destination, they fell out of the fireplace in the entrance hall of Domus Corvus Corax and headed straight to the ball room, where several people were already waiting. Before they went through the door, the four teenagers turned themselves invisible and stood in the corner, waiting for the rest to arrive. Dumbledore, with Fawkes on his shoulder, sat at the head of the table and looked out over the assembled crowd. The teachers from Hogwarts were the last to arrive, Minerva, Filius and Hagrid looking at their watches to make sure they would have time to get back to the school before the students arrived. The four in the corner watched in fascination as Minh and Eustace entered. They looked so much older than the last time they had seen them. After all, they were twelve when they left, and were now forty three. When everyone was seated, the headmaster stood up to speak.

“ Everyone, I am sorry for calling you here on such short notice, especially my fellow professors. I do know the students will be arriving in little over an hour, so I will be brief. While I was sitting in my office earlier a rather remarkable thing came to pass. Four former students of mine popped in to see me rather unexpectedly. Now, some of you will understand what is going on when you see them, and some of you will not. For those who have never met these individuals, or do not know their secret, I will allow them to briefly summarise their situation.”

Everyone was looking at the headmaster in curiosity and confusion. After a few moments, comprehension started to dawn in the eyes of Eustace and Minh.

“ Harry,” the elf whispered.

“ The very same,” the boy said as he stepped forward, lifting the invisibility spell. Both Minh and Eustace were on their feet in seconds and embracing him tightly. Harry hugged back with everything he had, silent tears of happiness falling down his cheeks.

“ Don’t we get a hello?”

The three pulled apart to stare at Ron, who had a decidedly cheeky grin on his face. Minh and Eustace went to greet the other three while Harry composed himself. It seemed like only hours since he had parted with his two friends, and in reality it was, but he was still emotional. This was his family, after all. The family he had long wanted to know, but had never had the opportunity to meet. When everyone had said hello, the group turned to the rest of the Order, some of which looked shocked, and some of which just looked confused.

“ Um...I suppose we’d better explain,” Harry said, taking his seat to the right of Dumbledore. Many people gave him strange looks for his choice of seat. In all the time most of them had been in the Order, no-one had sat at Dumbledore’s right side. It just wasn’t done. Not one of them had earned the privilege of being the headmaster’s second in command. A few of the younger members were going to protest that a mere teenager was presuming so much. However, before they had a chance to say anything, Harry stood up to address them all.

“ Hello, my name, as you have probably guessed, is Harry. These are my friends, Hermione, Ron and Ginny. Some of you will know me, and some of you will not. For those of you who do not, I will briefly tell you about my companions and myself. We are sixth year students at Hogwarts this year, but last year we completed our fifth year in 1944. This may sound confusing, but it is really quite simple. We are from the future. You may find this hard to believe, but it’s true. Being members of the Order of the Phoenix, you are being entrusted with this information. As it is strictly Order business, it will be covered by the secrecy spell, so you will not be able to speak about this to anyone. I am not prepared to go into details about the future, as that may result in a disastrous change in time. All I will say, is that we are from the year 1995. We came here using a magic amulet known as the Amulet of Time. This is the third time period we have visited, the first being in the time of the Hogwarts Founders, and the last being the school year 1943 to 1944. We are capable warriors, so I want no-one to question our ability to fight, as we will take it as a personal insult. Do I make myself clear?”

Everyone nodded, although most of them didn't like the idea of agreeing to the terms of a seventeen year old boy.

"That's good. I may be young, but I would like to remind you that I founded this Order, so if I am displeased, there will be penalties. Now that everything's cleared up, does anyone have any questions?"

"I do," Arthur Weasley spoke up.

"Go ahead, Mr. Weasley."

"How do you know my name?"

"The hair gave it away. Plus, I've met you before."

"That's what I wanted to ask. Were you the one who sang at Percy's funeral?"

"Yes, that was me."

"Ah, right. I thought you looked familiar."

"Any more questions?"

None were forthcoming, so Harry just sat back down and waited for the headmaster to take over the conversation. A soft murmur of conversation started up around the table, everyone talking about the new arrivals, but none brave enough to speak to the people themselves. After a few minutes, Dumbledore clapped his hands to regain the attention of everyone.

"If you could just spare an old man a few moments of your time, I would be grateful. Now, as Harry has said, there is a lot he can't tell us, but he and his companions are more than willing to help us in our fight against Voldemort."

There was a collective wince from most of the Order members. Before Dumbledore had chance to go on, Yanika raised her hand.

“ Um...Albus? I have a question.”

“ Go on, my dear.”

“ Well, if they can't change the future, how can they help us without making anything different.”

“ Ah, for the answer to that I would ask Harry to explain.”

Harry stood up once again, sighing to himself.

“ Yanika, I see where you are going with this, but I can explain that. The four of us were meant to come here. Our arrival was even prophecised by our very own Sybil Trelawney,” he said, nodding in the Divination teacher's direction, “ As long as we know what is supposed to happen, and don't actively try to change it, we can't do any harm. However, if we speak of the future, other people may not be as careful. In the prophecy I was called Ouroboros, as I am, I was, and I always will be. Don't try and make me explain, just accept it.”

Nodding, Yanika sat back in her seat and waited for the elderly headmaster to continue.

“ Now,” he said, “ I will let you get back to your lives. I'm sure you all have something to do. I will let Harry, Ron, Hermione and Ginny stay here for a bit longer so you can catch up, but I need all Hogwarts staff back at the school before the feast.”

With that, Dumbledore stood up and strode out of the door, heading for the floo system in the entrance hall. As soon as he left, the four teenagers were swamped by people greeting them again after so many years. Others were introducing themselves for the first time, as they had joined the Order after 1944. They spoke with Amelia Logan, and were rather distressed to hear her husband had died a few years before. The couple had also adopted Eustace not long after the four had left 1944, which Harry was glad to hear. He didn't like the idea of his friend being without a home. The four were also told about what had happened to Robert Black, who they had known as a first year. After the four had left, Minh and Eustace had become closer, and Robert had felt left out. By the end of school, he was close friends with various members of Slytherin House. After graduation,

he followed his family's path and joined Voldemort. Harry especially was rather disturbed to hear this, as he had been friends with the boy as a first year. It was also a shock to find out that Sirius' father was a Death Eater.

After a quick chat with Yanika, Eustace, and Minh, the four teenagers realised it was nearly time for the feast. Gathering up the lingering teachers, they all headed back to Hogwarts, promising to meet up with their friends the next day at Diagon Alley. Eustace and Minh would be there, as well as Yanika, Amelia and Heather Evans, an obliviator for the Ministry who Harry wanted to talk to. So many of the faces and names he had been faced with during the meeting were familiar. The old Order members he obviously knew, but some people, such as Molly and Arthur Weasley, he knew from the future. There were also a few people related to people he knew in the future, such as Peter Bones and Romulus Lupin, the fathers of Susan and Remus. He was a little disappointed when Lolide and Gaerwyn didn't come, but he figured they may be busy, and the meeting was rather short notice. His head was a whirl of thoughts as he arrived with his friends back at Hogwarts. As they were heading down to the feast, something suddenly occurred to him. For the first time that he could remember, he would be seeing his parents alive.

### Chapter Three – Wow, This is Weird!

Walking into the Hall, the four came to a standstill behind the rapidly dwindling line of first years waiting to be sorted. Dumbledore took his seat at the front as Minerva continued to call out names. The Hall was already full of students, who were watching the new arrivals with curiosity. The four shifted uncomfortable under such close scrutiny. Looking around at the sea of faces, they spotted some very familiar looking people. At the Gryffindor table the Marauders were easily visible. Harry felt a deep sadness come over him as he watched a beautiful redheaded fifth year with sparkling emerald green eyes talking animatedly with a weary seeming boy with a tired looking face and haunted eyes. Next to them, two dark haired boys, both sporting cheeky grins, were deep in conversation. It was obvious they were discussing who to prank next by the way they were eyeing up the Slytherin table. Across from them, a short tubby boy with dirty blond hair was trying to join in their conversation with little success. Harry's eyes narrowed as he spotted the rat who betrayed his parents.

Following the gaze of the younger version of his godfather, Harry glanced at some of the people sitting at the Slytherin table. A lot of them looked familiar as Death Eaters who had been at Voldemort's resurrection at the end of the Triwizard Tournament. Harry suppressed a shudder as his eyes locked onto the cruel gaze of a platinum blond seventh year. With a start, the Boy-Who-Lived realised he was looking at a younger version of Lucius Malfoy. Upon closer inspection, he could see the seventh year boy looked almost exactly like Caligula had at that age, and he knew Draco would be the same. The Malfoys all seemed to look the same, despite their mothers' genes. Lucius broke the gaze first, turning to speak to a younger boy next to him, who Harry realised with a start was a younger Severus Snape. Quickly averting his eyes, he continued to peruse the Great Hall.

Looking over to the Hufflepuff table, Harry spotted a few people who looked vaguely familiar. Someone who looked a little like Cedric Diggory was sitting with a group of younger students. *Must be his older brother*, Harry thought. He was talking to a group of students, some of which looked like other members of the Hufflepuff House in

Harry's time. There were also a few who reminded him of some of his Housemates the year before.

The Ravenclaw table, like the Hufflepuffs, showed a few people with passing resemblances to people he had met before, in the future or the past. He spotted a couple of seventh years holding hands, who looked like they could be Cho Chang's parents. When he thought of Cho, he realised he no longer felt anything for her. The only person he felt like *that* about was 'Tea. Thoughts of the Ravenclaw daughter made him seek her out. She should be floating around her House table, after all. After a few moments he spotted her sitting with a group of older students, having what seemed like a very involved conversation. It was obvious she hadn't spotted the time travellers entering. Harry sent a quick mental nudge in her direction, knowing her telepathic ability would allow her to pick it up. He watched amused as she started in surprise, before looking around the Great Hall frantically, trying to find the source. When she finally spotted him, their eyes met and held for what seemed like an age. Harry watched as a broad smile broke out on her face. She looked really happy to see him. Finishing her conversation with the Ravenclaws, she floated over inconspicuously, keeping an eye on the rapidly shortening line of first years. When she got to the group, she greeted her old friends in her mother tongue, surprising the few first years at the end of the line who were close enough to hear.

"Hello, you four. Long time no see."

"Well, it hasn't been as long as it was last time. And at least this time you weren't trapped in a stone."

"That's true, Harry. How have you all been?"

"We're fine. 'Tea," Ron told her, "We were a bit surprised when we got here and realised we were in a time when Harry's parents are alive. It's a bit of a shock for him."

"Oh, dear. I'd never thought of that. Are you alright, love?" Gallatea asked the boy she loved, laying an insubstantial hand on his arm.

“ I’ll be alright, ‘Tea. I think the biggest problem will be the House rivalry. I’m in Slytherin this year, and they’re in Gryffindor. We know from my godfather Sirius that the Marauders hated all Slytherins.”

“ Well, maybe you can show them that not all Slytherins are bad. I mean, Ron’s your best friend, and he’s a Gryffindor. Ron, just make sure you tell them that Harry isn’t evil, and introduce them. I’m sure they’ll look past House rivalries if you show them you’re a good person.”

“ Well, I hope so, ‘Tea. Hey, can you come to my room tomorrow night? We have some catching up to do. We’ll have been to Diagon Alley by then, as well. We’re going with some of the Order members. We had a meeting before, and they agreed to come.”

“ Sure, I’ll bring Peeves as well.”

“ Thanks, ‘Tea. Hey, I have a question. One of the Order members I asked to come tomorrow is called Heather Evans. Do you know if she’s related to my mother?”

“ Lily Evans? Yes, she’s Heather’s younger sister.”

“ Strange, I’ve never heard of her.”

At that moment, the last person in the line of first years was called forward by Minerva.

“ William Weasley!”

The four time travellers started at the name and looked at the young redheaded boy they hadn’t noticed before. While they were distracted, Gallatea floated back to the Ravenclaw table, sending them a quick mental ‘goodbye’. The four hardly noticed as they watched Bill Weasley place the sorting hat on his head. After a moment, it made its decision.

“ Gryffindor!”

He took the hat off his head and headed for the cheering table. It was now time for the new students to be introduced. They were



nervous about meeting so many people they knew as adults in the future. They were also unsure about their new names. This time, they were all to be given new names, even Hermione. She had wanted to keep her own name, but Dumbledore pointed out that she had it in the last time, and she would be having it in the future. Some people may recognise the name and become a little suspicious. They had all picked new names for the occasion, although they knew it would take a while for them to get used to being called by them. They had chosen things that they thought appropriate, and would hopefully not be too hard for them to remember. Ginny and Ron, thinking back to the Quidditch World Cup, had chosen the perfect name. The only problem was that they started giggling in remembrance whenever they heard it. Harry had chosen a Latin name appropriate for the time. It was snake related, which went well with his new House, as well as his love for Simbi and Nirah. Hermione had also chosen a Latin name, which translated as 'clever'. Everyone thought it suited her well. At that moment, Dumbledore stood up to address the curious students.

“ If I could just have your attention for a minute, I will let you fill your bellies all the more quickly. I have a rather unusual announcement to make. This year we are to be joined by four exchange students from one of the smaller British wizarding schools. They will be staying for one year only, so I ask that you make them all welcome. They are all the best of friends, but have each been placed in a different House, so I ask that House rivalries do not get in the way of their friendships. Now, please welcome Harry Anguifer, Hermione Sollers, Ronald Weatherby, and his sister Virginia Weatherby.”

The four looked at each other briefly before heading off to their respective tables. Before they parted, Harry sent a quick mental message to Ron.

~Hey, mate, I have an idea~

~What's that, mate?~

~I feel like a prank~

~Shouldn't we leave that to the Marauders? I don't think they'll appreciate the competition~

~That's the thing. We probably won't get in trouble. The teachers will pin it on the Marauders~

~Good idea. What should we do?~

Their conversation continued as they sat at their respective House tables and were greeted by the occupants.

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### **\*\*Hermione's POV\*\***

Hermione sat down at the Hufflepuff table and looked at the watching students a little uncomfortably. She didn't feel very good about joining the ranks of the Hufflepuffs. She had been perfectly comfortable with the Gryffindors and the Ravenclaws, but the Hufflepuffs weren't her type of people. She got on fine with them individually; especially Minh, but she didn't know how long she could spend in a House full of them. They weren't as bad as the Slytherins, which made Hermione look over to her friend in Slytherin in sympathy. After a few minutes watching Harry talk to some of the future Death Eaters, she turned her attention back to the rest of her table, offering them a small smile. The ones nearest to her smiled back and offered her their hands, and introduced themselves.

“Hi, I'm Joseph Abbott.”

“And I'm Alistair Bones, and this is my sister Gwyn.”

“I'm Andrew Diggory, it's nice to meet you.”

“Welcome to Hufflepuff, my name's Ernest Macmillan, and this is my friend Electra McKinnon.”

“Hello everyone, I'm Hermione Sollers.”

Looking around at the friendly faces around her, Hermione couldn't help but think that while Hufflepuff wasn't the best place for her, it wouldn't be too bad. *At least I'm not in Slytherin*, she thought, as she chatted to her new friends.

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### **\*\*Ginny's POV\*\***

Sitting down at the table, Ginny looked at the Ravenclaws she was next to. They all greeted her politely enough, but soon went back to their conversations. Ginny tried to join in a few times, but she couldn't always keep up with some of the complex theories about magic they were throwing around. While not exactly unintelligent, Ginny didn't really feel she was up to the Ravenclaw standard. Thinking about it, she remembered that Harry didn't think he would fit in there, but he ended up in love with one of them. Thinking of Harry and 'Tea made the young redhead a little depressed, so she started tucking into her meal, pretty much ignoring everyone else around her. That was, of course, until the Grey Lady herself settled down in the seat next to her, starting a conversation in Anglo-Saxon, much to the consternation of the other Ravenclaws. When they saw Ginny respond in the same language, they weren't impressed that their new Housemate knew more than them.

"Ginny, what's wrong?" 'Tea asked the younger girl.

"Nothing, I'm fine."

"No, you're not, tell me. You know you can always talk to me about anything."

"Sorry, 'Tea. This is the one thing I can't talk to you about."

"It's about Harry, isn't it?"

Ginny looked at the ghost in shock. She didn't think she was being so transparent. She decided to try and distract the Ravenclaw heir and persuade her it had nothing to do with her ex-boyfriend.

"What makes you say that?"

"Honey, I've been around a long time, and I've seen a lot of sixteen year olds. I can tell you're in love, and my guess would be Harry."

“ What makes you think it’s him?”

“ Simple process of elimination. If it was anyone from my time, you would have been depressed last year. The only people you were close to last year were your friends from the future, Minh, Eustace and Peeves. It can’t be Peeves, because he’s a poltergeist. You wouldn’t have fallen for Eustace because when you left he was only twelve. I highly doubt it was Caligula Malfoy or Satanus Snape, because they did nothing but torment you. That leaves Ron and Harry. Ron, apart from having a girlfriend already, is your brother. You don’t seem the type to be into incest, so that leaves Harry.”

“ How can I dispute logic like that?” Ginny asked with a watery smile.

“ You can’t, which is how I know I’m right.”

“ So, what if it *is* Harry? I can never have him anyway...”

“ Why not?”

“ Because he’s still in love with *you*, and he always will be. You know, I told him how I felt last year when we were being held captive by Grindelwald. He told me then that you were the love of his life, and that he still wasn’t over you.”

“ Well, I think I’ll have to have a chat with him about this....”

“ NO! ‘Tea, it’s alright. I respect his feelings, it’s just....”

“ You love him, don’t you?” Gallatea asked, hesitantly. All she got in response was Ginny miserably nodding her head. Making a decision, Gallatea told her friend exactly what she was going to do.

“ Gin? I think we need to meet up with Harry at some point and have a little chat. I suggest tomorrow we stay behind after the others leave so we can discuss this. I’m sure we can come to some arrangement.”

“ But ‘Tea...”

“ No buts. I’ve made my mind up. Yes, I still love Harry, and I always will, but I’ve been around a long time. I’ve had time to mourn and come to terms with our situation. Even for Harry it’s been a year. I’m dead now, and I can’t do anything about a relationship, but he still has his whole life ahead of him. From what I’ve seen so far it’s going to be pretty hard on him. He needs to move on and be happy. I’m not going to stand in the way. I think you two would be perfect for each other, and I’m going to convince you both of that fact even if it kills me. Well...again...or...oh, you get the idea.”

“ But...”

“ No arguments Ginny.”

“ Alright,” the youngest Weasley said quietly, while her head started spinning, full of thoughts about what could possibly happen if Gallatea talked Harry around.

\*~\*~\*

### **\*\*Ron’s POV\*\***

As soon as they four were allowed to sit down at their tables, Ron headed over to the end of the Gryffindor table where the Marauders were seated. He knew that if Harry was to ever have a chance at getting to know his parents, it was up to him to show them that not all Slytherins were bad. It would be easier if he made friends with them straight away. When he got to where they were seated, he noticed the only empty space was next to Peter Pettigrew. Ron didn’t much like the idea of being friends with the rat, but he gritted his teeth and forced a smile onto his face, before coughing politely to gain the attention of the conspiring Marauders.

“ Um...hi, can I sit here?” he asked when they looked up.

“ Sure. You’re Ron, right? Hi, I’m Sirius Black, and these are my idiot friends James Potter, Remus Lupin and Peter Pettigrew.”

“ Ahem,” came from the redheaded girl who had been talking to Remus at the sorting.

“ Oh, sorry, that’s Lily Evans.”

“ Nice to meet you all,” Ron said as he shook all of their hands, wincing a bit when he came to Peter.

“ So, what year are you in, Ron?” Remus asked him.

“ I’m a sixth year.”

“ Really? We’re fifth years. What are the OWLs like?”

“ Um...I’m not sure what to tell you, Sirius. They’re not that bad, I suppose. I mean, I missed two months of school last year and I still passed them all.”

“ Wow, what was wrong?” James asked.

“ Well...I can’t tell you. I’ve been sworn to secrecy. It’s Dark Lord related, though.” *They don’t have to know which Dark Lord*, Ron thought to himself.

“ Really? That sounds kind of dangerous,” Lily commented.

“ It was, but I’d rather not talk about it, please.”

“ Sure, whatever you say, mate. So what are these friends of yours like? It seems weird, four best friends being in all different Houses. I can’t imagine being friends with a slimy Slytherin,” Sirius was saying.

“ Oh, they’re all good people, really. We weren’t really sorted, you see. We were all placed in different Houses to...um...meet different people, so we can report back easier when we go back to our other school,” Ron explained, trying to make it sound convincing.

“ Oh, right. That’s not too bad then. You’ll have to introduce us.”

“ I will. My sister, Ginny, is in Ravenclaw. My girlfriend, Hermione, she’s in Hufflepuff. And Harry’s my best mate, he got stuck with Slytherin. Mind you, he may be a good influence on them...”

“ I doubt that,” James pointed out, “ We all know they’re mostly You-Know-Who’s supporters.”

“ Well, you don’t need to worry about Harry going Dark,” Ron said, thinking to himself that Harry was already Dark, so there was no danger of him becoming so, “ He’d never support Voldemort in a month of Sundays.”

“ You said his name!” Peter squeaked, and Ron noticed he was slightly rubbing his left arm.

“ Of course I did,” Ron said, “ I never used to, but it was Harry who made all three of us start saying his name. He said fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself.”

“ That makes sense.”

“Yeah, Lily’s right. Anyway, what makes you so sure your friend won’t turn Death Eater? I mean, he is in You-Know-Who’s old House, which is now full of his supporters.”

“ James, Voldemort killed Harry’s parents,” Ron said a little uncomfortably, “ He’s been wanting revenge ever since. Harry’s a very strong wizard, and he’s not one to cross. Voldemort tried to recruit him once, but he turned him down flat. And lived to tell the tale. If anyone can finally defeat him, it’ll be Harry.”

“ Really? I thought you said you were sixth years,” Sirius butted in.

“ We are. But Harry wants revenge, and he’s been training for a battle for years. It’ll come, eventually, when Harry’s prepared. I’m sure of it.”

“ Well, it think it’s time to change the subject, this conversation’s getting a bit depressing.”

“ I agree, Remus. Ron, do you like pranks?”

“ Do I ever, Sirius!”

“ Well, we were planning one for the Slytherins, what do you think...?”

\*~\*~\*

**\*\*Harry's POV\*\***

Harry didn't feel at all comfortable as he took his seat at the Slytherin table. Unfortunately for him, the only place free apart from with the first years was opposite Lucius Malfoy. As soon as he sat down, the blond boy smirked at him, and introduced himself, holding his hand out to the green eyed boy. Harry took it tentatively, not keen on making enemies unless provoked.

"Hello, I'm Lucius Malfoy. Welcome to Slytherin."

"Thank you," Harry said, "You would be Caligula's son, then?"

"Yes, that's right. Have you met him?"

"Yes, a long time ago. I doubt he'd remember me."

"Indeed. Let me ask, are you a pureblood?"

Harry had been expecting this question, and was suitably prepared with a reasonable sounding response.

"But of course. My parents were a witch and a wizard, if that's what you mean. I can trace my family back to the time of the founders."

"Very impressive. What did you say your name was again?"

"Harry Anguifer."

"Anguifer? I don't recall hearing of that family..."

"We're from France, originally."

"I see. Latin name as well. Means 'snake bearing' if I'm not mistaken."

"That's true. I have a particular affinity to snakes."

\*You can say that again, Harry\*

~Not now, Simbi~



\*Sorry, Harry\*

Lucius was looking at the new boy in curiosity when he seemed to space out for a minute.

“ Harry? Are you still with us?”

“ Oh, yes. Now, why don’t you introduce me to the rest of your House, Lucius?”

“ Oh yes, of course. To my right we have Nott, Avery, MacNair and Lestranger. These to my left are Crabbe and Goyle,” he said, pointing to the two goons sitting next to him. Harry was strongly reminded of Draco, constantly being followed by these boys’ sons.

“ Hello,” Harry greeted reluctantly.

“ And this is Severus Snape. He’s a fifth year, and rather useful. If you ever need anything doing. And I mean, *anything*, just tell him to do it. That’s what I do.”

“ Isn’t that a bit unfair?”

“ What do you mean, unfair?”

“ Him having to do everything you say.”

“ Well, I’m a Malfoy. If you know what’s good for you, you’ll learn that I run this House. Everyone answers to me. I’ll let you off today, seeing as you’re new, but don’t expect me to be so lenient in the future.”

“ What, you expect me to obey you?”

“ Yes, because if you don’t, I have some friends in *very* high places who will soon change your mind.”

“ I’m sure you do, Lucius, but *I’m* warning *you*. Don’t mess with me. I can be very dangerous if I want to be.”

As Harry sat back in his chair, he shifted slightly; moving his robes in such a way that everyone in the vicinity could see he was wearing an assortment of weapons about his person.

“ Well, Harry, I’m impressed. But I have to ask. Just who do you work for? You look like a trained assassin to me. Are you one of the old fool’s lapdogs?”

“ If you are referring to the headmaster, then no, I don’t work for him.” *I work with him*, he silently added.

“ Then you are one of us?”

“ Define ‘us’.”

“ Loyal to the Dark Lord,” the older boy whispered. Harry just sneered in return.

“ Let me make one thing clear, *Malfoy*, I don’t bow down to anyone, especially whiney little *half-bloods* with delusions of grandeur. Did you know your Master was a half blood? And you bow down to him? And you call yourself a Malfoy?”

Lucius couldn’t take any more and was on his feet in an instant, wand pointed at Harry’s chest. The other boy simply raised an eyebrow at the fuming Malfoy.

“ Do you think you can scare me, Malfoy? If you do, you’re gravely mistaken. I suggest you put your wand away and sit down, before I do to you the same thing that happened to your grandfather Tiberius.”

“ How do you know about that?!”

“ Oh, I have my ways. Now this is your last warning. Don’t. Mess. With. Me.”

The seventh year reluctantly took his seat and started a conversation with Goyle. Harry turned to the wide eyed Snape and smiled.

“ Don’t let him push you around. He’s nothing but a bully.”

Snape simply nodded in gratitude and turned back to his meal. Harry took the opportunity to think up a good prank. When he thought of something, he sent a quick mental message to Ron, Hermione and Ginny asking them to play along, to keep suspicion away from them. He then discreetly waved his hands under the table, casting a strong silencing charm on everyone in the room except for the Marauders, the Headmaster, and the Heads of Houses. When the whole room fell silent except for the four plotting Gryffindors, everyone's attention turned to them. They soon trailed off when they realised everyone was looking at them with varying degrees of malice. They glanced around confused, until Minerva stood up to yell at them.

“POTTER! BLACK! DETENTION!”

“What did we do?” Sirius asked James.

“I really don't know.”

## Chapter Four – Snape

The evening of September 1st was a very silent affair. The teachers who still had the ability to talk were frantically trying to find a counter spell to the silencing charm placed on the entire student body. Up in Dumbledore's office, James and Sirius were being thoroughly interrogated on the matter, much to their confusion. They knew they hadn't pulled the prank but the fact that they and their two friends were the only ones who could still talk made them seem all the more suspicious. Remus and Peter had avoided blame as neither of them was magically strong enough to perform such a powerful silencing spell. James and Sirius, however, had enough power between them to pull it off.

The main problem the teachers faced was reversing the effects. As only the Heads of House and the headmaster were unaffected, anyone having lessons with any other teachers the next day would be in trouble. If the teachers couldn't speak, they couldn't teach. The students would also be unable to answer any questions in the classes with the teachers that *could* speak. The staff found the whole situation very frustrating.

Down in the Slytherin common room, Harry was enjoying the effects of the spell. Lucius was getting frustrated, as no-one was listening to anything he tried to say. He had resorted to writing things in the air with his wand, much like Tom Riddle had done in the Chamber of Secrets in Harry's second year. The Boy-Who-Lived was highly amused when Crabbe and Goyle merely stared at the written demands in confusion. After an hour, the miserable Malfoy headed up to the dormitories, silently grumbling to himself. Harry didn't stay up much longer himself, as he was finding it hard not to start laughing at the wildly gesturing Slytherins all trying to communicate with little success. He knew that if he started to laugh out loud, his new Housemates would realise he wasn't affected by the spell.

The next morning, Harry got up especially early and headed down to the Great Hall for breakfast. There was no-one there when he arrived, but that was fine by him. He wanted to make sure he was there before the Marauders so he could see the reactions of the rest of the school when they came for breakfast. He didn't have long to

wait. Soon, the rest of the Houses started to pour silently into the room. Unfortunately for the Marauders, they came down late, meaning they were some of the last to arrive. Glares met them as soon as they entered, and they slinked off to the end of the Gryffindor table without saying a word. Harry smiled at his success. He had pulled off a great prank, and he didn't even get the blame. Spotting his friends sitting around the Hall, Harry sent them a quick mental message.

~Hey, guys, how you holding up?~

~Harry! Can you lift this spell? It's getting boring not being able to have a conversation with anybody. And the teachers are looking angry~

~Really? I hadn't noticed, 'Mione~

Harry looked up at the head table and saw that most of the teachers were scowling and grumbling silently to themselves. Grinning evilly, Harry inconspicuously waved his hand again, silencing the previously unaffected teachers. Dumbledore and Professor Sewell were interrupted half way through a quiet discussion when they realised they could no longer speak. Harry averted his gaze before they realised who had cast the spell. He smiled smugly to himself. *I have the whole school under my control, he thought, this could be fun...*

Meanwhile, at the Hufflepuff table, Hermione was watching her friend closely. She was starting to get worried about him. In her opinion he was taking the joke a little too far, and should have ended it the night before. She would never give him away to the teachers, but she decided it would be best if she had a little chat with him later on when they met in Harry's room.

\*~\*~\*

After breakfast, the four headed up to Harry's room, from where they would be heading to Corvus Corax to meet the rest of the people going with them to Diagon Alley. When they arrived, Minh and Eustace were already waiting. Harry went straight over to them and gave them each a hug.

“ Hi Minh, Eustace.”

“ Hi Harry, how was your first day?”

“ It was fun! I did this prank at the feast last night, and I still haven't taken it off!”

“ What did you do?” Eustace asked eagerly.

“ Not much. Just cast a mass silencing spell on the whole school. No one can talk except for us four, and the Marauders.”

“ Why did you leave my son and his friends alone? You can't have become that good of friends already.”

“ Actually, I haven't spoken to them yet. I just told Ron, Gin and 'Mione to keep quiet. When James and Sirius were the only ones in the Hall talking, they got the blame!”

“ Harry, that's brilliant!”

“ You're not mad?”

“ Why would I be?”

“ Well, I got your son a detention on the first day.”

“ Ha! I should be mad, but that's just classic. The one time they didn't do anything and they get the blame.”

“ Ahem,” Minh said, “ I think it's time that you two 'boys' finished your discussion. It's time to go.”

Looking around sheepishly, Harry and Eustace greeted Yanika, Amelia and Heather before heading to the apparition point. Amelia, being a squib, was flooing into the Leaky Cauldron, but the rest were apparating. Once they all arrived, they headed to Gringotts, where Amelia changed some Muggle money while the rest went down to their vaults. When they were all back on the street, they agreed to split up to make the trip faster. The four students were supposed to be in lessons, however disorganised they would be, but had been

given the morning off to get their school supplies. It was already ten o'clock, and they had to be back at Hogwarts for lunch at twelve. Hermione, Yanika, Amelia and Ginny decided to pick up books for everyone from Flourish and Blott's, Ron, Eustace and Minh would gather stationary and other bits and bobs, while Harry and his new friend Heather would go to the apothecary to get potions ingredients. They agreed to meet in Madame Malkin's shop in an hour to get their new robes.

As soon as they split up, Harry started asking the Obliviator about his mother, which is what he wanted to do all along. Although he knew from 'Tea that Heather was his aunt, he wanted it confirmed from the source.

"Heather, are you related at all to Lily Evans?"

"Yes, I am. I'm her older sister. Why?"

"Just wondering. I've heard about her at school. She was talking to Ron at the Gryffindor table yesterday. I just thought with you both having the same last name, you might be related..."

"Yes, we are. She's my youngest sister. I have another sister, Petunia, who's the middle child. She's the odd one out, though, as she's just an ordinary Muggle. When I first got my Hogwarts letter, she was really excited. She couldn't wait to be eleven for when she got her own. When her birthday came and passed, she was really disappointed. It got worse when Lily got her letter. Petunia got really jealous, and hardly speaks to the pair of us now. Luckily she left home last year to marry some oaf called Vernon Dursley, so we don't see much of her these days."

"She really wanted to be a witch?" Harry asked in disbelief.

"Yeah, she did."

"Wow, that's bad for her."

"Yeah, well, there's nothing she can do about it now. So, Harry, do you have any siblings?"

“ Nope, it’s just me. My parents died when I was young, so I probably would have had a younger brother or sister if they’d lived.”

“ That’s awful!”

“ Well, Ron, Gin, and ‘Mione are like my family now. I don’t know what I’d do without them. These last couple of years, ending up in strange times, I don’t know if I’d have stayed sane if I’d been alone. The one good thing about not having a family, though, is that I’m not as homesick as the other three. Ron and Ginny especially miss their family. They have five older brothers, so just being the two of them has been tough. Hermione feels isolated as well sometimes. I think it’s because she misses her parents, but unlike the other two, she doesn’t have any of her family with her. At least Ron and Ginny have each other, so they’re not totally alone.”

“ What about you? Surely you miss home.”

“ Sometimes I miss some of my friends, and my godfather, but most of the time it’s a relief. At least here I don’t have a madman out for my blood.”

“ Is that what it’s like in your time? How did that come about?”

“ I can’t tell you much. Preserving the space/time continuum and all. Voldie’s still around in my time, and over the course of my life I’ve done rather a lot to piss him off. I’m his number one target, and have been for years. Two years ago when I landed in Celtic Scotland I was more than relieved. For the first time since I went to Hogwarts, I felt safe.”

“ That’s awful!”

“ Welcome to my life.”

\*~\*~\*

Everyone met up at eleven as planned, and after a quick stop at the robe shop headed back to their respective homes. Over the hour they had spent alone together, Harry had made a firm friend in Heather, and she promised she would speak to him again at the next



Order meeting. Once the four students and Minh were all back at Hogwarts, they headed to the Great Hall for lunch. The place, as expected, was completely silent except for the clinking of cutlery on plates. Harry immediately noticed that the teachers looked more than a little frazzled. He found their state of distress rather amusing, but Hermione didn't join him in his opinion. She sent a quick mental shove his way when she sat at the Hufflepuff table, indicating she wanted him to form a mental link so she could speak to him.

~What is it, 'Mione?~

~Harry, I think you should lift the spell. This is going a bit far~

~Aw, 'Mione, stop being a spoilsport. If it bothers you that much, lift it yourself~

This had never occurred to her. She silently fumed at her idiocy, being heavily reminded of her first year with the Devil's Snare when she complained about not having any wood to make a fire. Waving her hand in the way of a counter charm, she was surprised when nothing happened. Looking across the Hall at the Slytherin table, she met Harry's amused smile.

~Ok Harry, what have you done?~

~I set the spell so only I could lift it. Otherwise Dumbledore would have had it ended by now. Before he lost his voice, that is...~

~HARRY!~

~What? It's just a bit of harmless fun~

~It's not harmless when it disrupts people's education~

~But, 'Mione...~

~NO Harry. Lift it. Now~

~Ok, ok, I will. But don't tell anyone I have. I want to see how long it takes people to realise they can speak. It looks like they're not even

trying now, and just using gestures. It may be a while before anyone realises~

With a wave of his hand, Harry lifted the spell on everyone. As expected, he sat there for the next twenty minutes in a silent Hall. Thinking they still couldn't speak, the staff and students weren't even trying anymore. When it came time for classes, Harry and his friends picked up their timetables and headed off to their lessons. Harry had double potions with the Gryffindors. When he went in the dungeon room, he took a seat at the back of the class next to Ron. He hadn't had chance to make friends with any of the sixth year Slytherins, as the only ones he had spoken with were Lucius Malfoy in seventh year and Severus Snape in fifth year before he had pranked everyone. His new House gave him a funny look when he sat next to a Gryffindor, but just ignored him after that. When Professor Sewell came into the classroom, she shot red and green sparks into the air to get everyone's attention. After pointing to the board and gesturing for them to write, she started to put the potion they would be making up on the board.

Harry thought it was funny when one of the Slytherins blew up their cauldron half way through the class. Professor Sewell ran over and made to shout, but stopped herself before she had chance to realise she could speak. Instead, she closed her mouth and made angry gestures at the bemused looking student. Harry sat rocking on his chair in silent mirth, trying his best to hold in his laughter. Ron noticed he was starting to turn purple and lifted an enquiring eyebrow.

~She doesn't know she can talk. None of them do~

~You lifted the spell?~

~Yeah, at lunch. 'Mione made me~

~Are you saying they've been able to talk for two hours, and no-one's noticed?~

~Yep. They all assume they can't, so they don't bother to try. Some of the other classes may have worked it out, but as you can see, no-one here has~

~Two hours? You're serious?~

~Uhuh~

Ron couldn't control himself as well as Harry, and burst out laughing. Everyone in the class immediately whirled around and stared at him in astonishment. Professor Sewell was the first to recover and headed over to the boys in the back. Seeing that Ron could talk she tried it herself and was surprised when it worked.

" Mr. Weatherby," more laughing from Ron, " What is the meaning of this?"

" I'm sorry, Professor. Harry was just telling me that we've been able to speak since lunch, and no-one's figured it out yet."

" And how did you find out, Mr. Ev- Anguifer?"

" I realised at lunch time when I was coming out of the Great Hall," Harry lied, " I didn't want to say anything, incase it was just me and I got in trouble for being able to talk."

" And how did you tell this to Mr. Weatherby?"

Harry gave her a pointed look.

~You were in the Order in 1944, Professor. Surely you remember I'm a telepath~

" Oh, yes. I'm sorry, I forgot. Nevertheless, Mr. Weatherby, ten points from Gryffindor for disturbing class, and five will be awarded for letting us know that we could talk, despite the unorthodox method used."

" Yes, Professor," Ron said, getting himself under control.

\*~\*~\*

When everyone went into dinner that evening, Harry was amused to see that only about half of the students were talking. After a few minutes, the rest all tried to talk, and found that they didn't have a

problem. Looking up at the head table, the Boy-Who-Lived realised that Dumbledore had a look of relief on his face. Looking closer, it suddenly hit Harry how much pressure the whole thing had placed on the aging headmaster. A knot of guilt settled itself in his chest as he realised how affected the whole school had been. He felt even more guilty when he realised that he enjoyed having the power to do something like that. The thought frightened him a little, but he tried to put it to the back of his mind.

As soon as dinner ended, Harry left to head up to his room where he was to meet his friends. When he got there, Minh and Eustace were sitting in front of the fire, chatting away to Gallatea. When he came in, they all greeted him as he took a seat next to his grandmother. A few minutes later, everyone else arrived, and they spent a good hour catching up on everything that had been going on. Eventually, with a whoop, Peeves came floating through the wall and grinned at the group.

“ Fellow Marauders, welcome back. Peevesie’s missed you all. Had to play pranks myself, I did. Not as much fun. That one today was brilliant, though. A stroke of genius!”

“ That was you?!” ‘Tea exclaimed, looking at the sheepish foursome.

“ It was Harry,” Hermione piped up, earning herself a glare from the boy in question.

“ Oh, come on! You have to admit it was a good one.”

“ Yes, but you did let it drag on a bit.”

“ True, I must admit. You won’t tell Dumbledore, will you ‘Tea?”

“ Would I do that? Your old time partner in crime? Betray a fellow Marauder? Never!”

“ That’s the spirit.”

“ Seriously, Harry, I’m getting worried about you. I heard the confrontation with Lucius Malfoy you had yesterday, and you were

acting very out of character. And then letting the prank go on so long...”

“ I’m sorry, ‘Mione. I’m fine though.”

“ Harry, I’m not so sure...”

“ Leave it, Hermione.”

“ But, Harry...”

“ I said leave it.”

“ But...”

“ Hermione, I’m fine. *Leave it.*”

Hermione looked at her friend skeptically. He didn’t seem to be acting like he usually did, but she decided to leave it for now. She would monitor the situation, and if it got any worse she would talk to Ron and Ginny about confronting him. After another half hour, with the old Marauders planning some pranks to rival the new generation, everyone started to leave. Minh and Eustace went back home to their house in Godric’s Hollow, and Ron and Hermione went off together to have some time alone as a couple. After Peeves floated off to annoy Filch, ‘Tea turned to the silent Harry and Ginny.

“ Alright, you two. I need to talk to you, you in particular, Harry.”

“ What’s up, ‘Tea?”

“ Harry, when are you going to move on?”

“ WHAT!”

“ I mean, I’m dead, and you have a life to lead. When are you going to move on with your life and get a new girlfriend?”

“ What’s brought this on?”

“ Well, I was talking to Ginny at the feast, and she seems to have...feelings for you.”

“ I know, ‘Tea, and I must admit, I feel some less than platonic things for her, but I just don’t think I’m ready...”

“ Harry, it’s been over a year for you...”

“ But you’ve had a thousand! You’ve had time to get over me, but I’m not there yet,” Harry said, before turning to the watching redhead,  
“ Ginny, I do want to go out with you in the future, if you’ll have me. But we discussed this when we were captured. I’ll let you know when I’m ready.”

“ I understand Harry, and you’re worth the wait.”

“ So what’s the problem,” he asked, turning back to the ghost.

“ I just want you to be happy, that’s all.”

“ I am, ‘Tea, but just don’t push me. Please.”

“ Alright.”

Harry sighed. When they had been the only three left in the room, he felt something like this would be happening, but he just didn’t feel ready to have a relationship with Ginny. He felt a little off at the moment as well. Hermione had been right to be concerned, and he was regretting shouting at her. Deciding he would speak to her in the morning, he said his goodnights and headed back down to the Slytherin Common room.

\*~\*~\*

Much to Harry’s relief, the sixth and seventh year Slytherins were given their own rooms. Due to the nature of Slytherins in general, it was deemed unsafe to have the older ones in a room together. You never knew when you were going to be betrayed by a year mate. It was easier to split them all up. It wasn’t such a big problem for the younger years, as they didn’t know as many spells, and they weren’t as dangerous at that age.

When Harry got back to his room, he sat down with one of his Dark Arts books and started to do some bedtime reading. He was

disturbed from his learning by a hesitant knock on his door. Going over, he cast a charm that would allow him to see through the door without the person on the other side realising they were being watched. Much to his surprise, Harry found the young Severus Snape standing outside his room, shifting from one foot to the other and looking nervous. With a sigh, the sixth year pulled the door open and ushered the younger boy inside. When they were both seated, Harry started the conversation.

“ What are you doing here, Severus?”

“ Um...I’m really sorry for disturbing you, but I just wanted to thank you.”

Harry looked at the boy in amazement. He was nothing like his older self. For one thing, the icy Potions Master would never thank anyone for anything.

“ What are you thanking me for?”

“ For putting Malfoy in his place. He’s been mean to me since I started. I think it’s because our fathers are friends.”

“ Ah, yes. The infamous Satanus and Caligula.”

“ You know them?” Severus asked in confusion.

“ Yes, quite well, actually, but I’m not prepared to say how.”

“ Oh, that’s alright.”

“ So, what does Malfoy do to you?”

“ Oh, he’s not that bad. He just orders me about. He’s two years older than me, and he’s threatened to hex me if I don’t do what he asks.”

“ But why do you put up with it?”

“ Well...he’s older. And he knows more spells than me. And he disapproves of my...loyalties. He says that if I don’t do what he says he’ll tell my father.”

“ What’s wrong with your loyalties?”

Severus’ eyes widened when he realised what he had mentioned.

“ I shouldn’t have said that!”

“ It’s alright, Severus...”

“ Call me Sev.”

“ Alright, Sev. It’s alright, you can talk to me. I won’t judge.”

“ But, we’re Slytherins...”

“ So?”

“ You have a lot to learn about your new House, Harry. The first rule here is that you don’t trust anyone.”

“ Well, you can trust me. And I’m prepared to trust you. I think we both need friends here, so why not be friends with each other. If you give me your trust and be my friend, I’ll help you with Lucius.”

“ You can’t fight my battles,” Sev said, a familiar scowl on his face. Harry smiled when he saw it, realising that the greasy git he knew in the future was in there somewhere.

“ I don’t intend to. I intend to teach you how to fight your own. If you trust me, and let me help you, I’ll teach you how to stand up for yourself. You’ll find the skills useful in the future.”

“ What sort of skills?”



“ Before I tell you, I have to cast a secrecy charm on you, so you can't inadvertently speak of it to anyone else.”

“ You want to cast a spell on me?”

“ Yes. Trust me.”

Sev looked into Harry's eyes and saw the sincerity in them. After a minute thinking over his options he hesitantly nodded his head. Harry smiled and waved his hand, muttering under his breath. Sev's eyes widened when he realised his new friend was doing wandless magic. When he was finished, Harry beamed at his charge.

“ Now, what do you want me to teach you?”

“ Did you just do wandless magic?”

“ Yes, I did. I can teach you some, if you like. But I have to warn you, you will have to at least appear to be using your wand in lessons. You don't want to give away the fact that you can use it. Save it for battles in the future, when the element of surprise could save your life.”

“ What makes you think I'll be in battles in the future?”

“ There's a war on, you will have to pick a side.”

“ As if I have a choice,” Sev muttered under his breath. Harry pretended not to have heard and continued.

“ I also think you should learn the animagus transformation.”

“ Really?! You could teach me that? Are you an animagus?”

In response, Harry turned into his beautiful snow leopard form, startling the younger boy. Severus watched in awe as the leopard stretched out its pure white wings. When Harry turned back, he watched the fifth year in amusement.

“ Obviously, your form wouldn't be the same, but you get the idea. I'll teach you wandless magic, the animagus transformation, some

weapons work, and a whole host of advanced spells. How does that sound?"

" Why are you doing this? We've only just met."

" Because I want to. I think by the time Lucius has spread his poison around the House, no-one else will be friends with me. It's going to be a pretty lonely year if the whole House hates me. I need a friend. Besides, I like teaching, it's fun. And I think you will need the training in the future."

" Thanks, Harry."

" No problem."

" Can I use what I learn on the Marauders?"

" Who?" Harry asked, acting ignorant. *After all, he thought, a new student couldn't be expected to know about them yet.*

" The Marauders. James Potter and his friends. They're the resident pranksters, and think they're so superior. I'm one of their primary victims."

" Well, we'll see about that. My friend Ron and I used to be pranksters at our old school, so I think they'll have a run for their money this year. Do you want to help?"

" Do I ever! Anything to get back at them for all the times they've humiliated me."

" Well, I'll warn you now. I'm likely to make friends in other Houses, because I have one of my best friends in each House. Ron's already getting friendly with them, so if I do get to be their friend, please don't abandon me. I'll still be your friend, and I have no intention of helping them with any of their pranks. In fact, if I find out about any against you in advance, I'll let you know."

" But they're horrible..."

" Please, Sev. Call it a favour to return the favour I will be doing you."

“ Well...alright. But as long as I don't have to be civil to them.”

“ Oh, no! That's fine.”

“ Alright, then. I'd better get to my dorm, it's getting late.”

“ Yeah, and I have some homework to do.”

“ Before I go, can I ask you something?”

“ Sure, anything, but I can't guarantee I will give you an answer.”

“ Whose side are you on? In the war, I mean.”

“ All I'll say on the matter is that Voldemort and I go back a long way, and I will never bow down to him. Other than that, I do not pass judgment.”

“ Alright. G'night Harry.”

“ Night, Sev.”

As the door closed behind the young Potions Master, Harry let out a loud sigh. He was surprised at how little the boy resembled his older self. Thinking about what they had talked about that night, he wondered if he had a hand in creating the cold and efficient spy he would come to know in the future.

## Chapter Five – Slytherins and Gryffindors Friends?

September 3rd found Harry, Ron, Hermione and Ginny sitting in the Hogwarts library, their homework spread out before them. They hadn't seen each other all day, as none of the Houses had had lessons together, so they had met up after dinner in the library to catch up. They had a few essays to do, but had laid them aside to catch up on their gossip.

" So, 'Mione, how are you getting on in Hufflepuff?" Harry asked her.

" It's not too bad. I was more comfortable in Ravenclaw, where I was with more like minded people, but it's better than Slytherin any day."

" Slytherin's not so bad. I got on better there than I am in Ravenclaw," Ginny added, " The people in my new House are all so intellectual. Whenever I try and have a conversation with one of them, I end up feeling really stupid."

" You're not stupid, Gin. You just think there's more to life than schoolwork and grades, unlike these two," Ron said, gesturing to Harry and Hermione.

" Hey! I think about more than schoolwork," Harry protested, " Like pranks!"

" That's true, Harry. How are you getting on in Slytherin, by the way? It must be awful!"

" It's not so bad. I think I made an impression at the Welcome Feast when I told Malfoy off. He's been storming around for the last two days."

" I can't believe you're stuck with that Death Eater. Have you made any friends?"

" Well, just one, but it's tentative at the moment."

" Who?" Hermione asked in curiosity.

" Severus Snape."

“ SNAPE! Harry, are you mental?”

“ No Ron, I’m not mental. He’s...different. Not as cold and mean. I think that came later after years of being a spy. He’s quite nice once you get him to open up a little.”

“ But...Snape!?”

“ Yes, Snape. Ron, I need to have at least one friend in my own House, or it’ll be a very long year. He needs a friend and so do I, so I don’t see where the problem is.”

“ Snape?!”

“ Oh, Ron, leave Harry alone. If he wants to be friends with Snape, then let him.”

“ Ginny? How can you defend that greasy git?”

“ Oh Ron, grow up,” Hermione exclaimed, exasperated.

“ Can we change the subject please? Ron, how are you getting on with my parents and the Marauders?”

“ Fine, Harry. They’re really nice. We’re sort of friends at the moment, but it would be hard to penetrate their little group. I think they’ll be in here later, so I’ll introduce you.”

Harry suddenly felt really nervous. Sure, he had seen his parents and their friends across the Great Hall from quite a distance, and passed them a few times in the corridors between lessons, but he had never actually spoken to them. The thought made him very worried. What if they didn’t like him? What if they hated him for his House? What if they didn’t mind, but made him choose between them and Sev? Would he abandon his new friend for his parents if he had to? Thoughts flitted through his mind for what seemed an age before he was brought back to the present by an insistent shaking of his shoulder. Looking across, he came face to face with a concerned looking Ginny.

“ Are you alright, Harry? You spaced out here for a minute.”

“ Sorry, Gin. I was just thinking.”

“ What about?”

“ My parents. I was wondering if they would hate me.”

“ What for?!”

“ Well, any number of reasons. They may not like my personality, or the fact that I’m a Slytherin. They might doubt my loyalty...”

“ They won’t. Who *couldn’t* like you, Harry? You’re the nicest, kindest person I’ve ever met.”

“ Thanks, Gin. I just worry, you know?”

“ Because you don’t like the idea of your parents disliking the person you’ve become.”

“ Yeah.”

Just then the people in question came waltzing through the library door. Literally. Sirius was watching the couple in amusement as they danced around the tables, gaining a stern look from the librarian. After a few minutes, the spell wore off and both James and Lily turned to a smirking Sirius, scowls on their faces.

“ What?” the prankster asked.

“ Sirius, that wasn’t funny,” Lily growled.

“ Yes it was.”

“ No it wasn’t.”

“ Was.”

“ Wasn’t.”

“ Was.”

“ Wasn’t.”

“ Ok, I think that’s enough, you two,” Remus interjected. Sirius and Lily looked contrite for a few seconds before grinning at each other.

Just then, James got his eye on the four time travellers sitting on the corner of the library. With a grin he bounded over to them and slapped Ron on the back.

“ Hey, mate, how’s it going?”

“ Not bad, James. What did Sirius do this time?

“ He pranked Lily and me. We’ve been waltzing since the start of dinner.”

“ So that’s why you didn’t come to the Great Hall?”

“ Yeah, we were stuck in Gryffindor Tower. We had to make an emergency trip down to the kitchens.”

“ Well, at least you would get plenty to eat. Those house elves are insane.”

“ Too true. So, are these your friends from your other school?”

“ Yeah, they are.”

“ Well, are you going to introduce us?”

Ron blushed bright red, and smiled at his friends sheepishly.

“ Sorry, James. That’s Hermione Sollers, my girlfriend from Hufflepuff. This is my sister, Ginny. She’s a Ravenclaw. And that’s Harry Anguifer, our resident Slytherin.”

“ Hello everyone. I’m James Potter, and these are my friends, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, Peter Pettigrew, and my girlfriend Lily Evans.”

“ Hello.”

“ Hi.”

“ Hello. Lily, I know your sister. She was telling me about you yesterday.”

“ You know my sister? How?” the redhead asked her son.

“ I met her the other day. We had to go to Diagon Alley yesterday morning to get our school supplies, and she was one of the adults going with us.”

“ Hang on,” Sirius said, a frown on his face, “ If you went yesterday morning, then how did you speak to her?”

Harry immediately realised what he had said, and to whom. The previous morning they were supposed to be under the silencing spell, and saying that he had been speaking to Lily’s sister was as good as announcing that he had been responsible for the prank. Frantically thinking of a way out, he was alarmed when a suspicious look passed across the Marauder’s face.

“ Um...well I broke the spell.”

“ And how did you do that? Even Dumbledore couldn’t break it.”

“ Well, I’m very powerful.”

“ Sheesh, you’ve been in Slytherin for two days and you’re already sounding like one of them.”

“ Hey! There’s nothing wrong with Slytherin. Why don’t you like us, anyway? Not everyone in my House is evil.”

“ In our experience, no Slyth can be trusted. Most of your House are Death Eaters.”

“ Sirius, that’s a generalisation. Some of the Slytherins are alright. I mean, sure, Malfoy’s a git, and a Death Eater, but I’m not.”

“ How do we know that?” James asked.

Harry gave his father a hurt look. He was a little annoyed that the Marauders didn’t seem to like him, purely on the basis of his



House. He knew he would have to change their mind. He thought back to his own first four years at Hogwarts when he had held the same prejudices. He felt ashamed thinking about it. *Must be my stint as a Hufflepuff*, he thought, *it's made me more loyal and trusting. Not that that's necessarily a good thing.* Looking back to the waiting Marauders, he held out his arm and lifted up his sleeve, showing a bare left forearm. The five fifth years gasped when they saw the lattice of thin scars marring his skin, a reminder of his days in captivity.

“Are you satisfied now?” Harry asked the gaping students.

“Um, yeah,” Sirius answered, “But where did you get those scars?”

“If you don’t mind us asking,” Remus hastily added, not wanting to be rude.

“Well, if you must know, I got them from a Dark wizard.”

“Really? Who?”

Harry looked at Peter, who had asked the question, and frowned a little bit.

“Well, let’s just say that I don’t like Dark Lords in general.”

“Really?! Wow.”

“James! I hardly think ‘wow’ is an appropriate response. What happened, Harry? You don’t have to tell us, of course,” Lily said.

“No, it’s fine. I want to be your friend, and if it’ll get you to trust me, then I’ll tell you.”

“Don’t feel you have to prove yourself,” Remus told him, “We all have secrets we don’t want everyone to know about.”

“Thanks, Remus, but I’ll tell you. I trust you will keep it to yourselves, though?”

“Of course.”

“ Sure.”

“ Anything you say.”

“ If you want.”

“ We wouldn’t betray your trust.”

“ Alright. At the end of last year I was captured after a battle...”

“ You were in a battle?” James asked, confused.

“ Don’t worry, I’m on the right side.

“ It’s not that. It’s just that you’re so young.”

“ I did say I was powerful. I’m useful in a battle.”

“ Oh.”

Before he continued, Harry sent a quick mental message to his three friends.

~Do you mind if I tell them you were captured? I won’t give them details~

Ron, Hermione and Ginny all nodded in agreement, so Harry continued.

“ Anyway, last year all four of us were captured after the battle, and taken prisoner.”

“ Really? What was it like?” Peter asked.

“ Not fun. We got split up. Hermione and Ron were taken to one place, and Ginny and I were taken to another. Ron and ‘Mione were forced to work, and lived in terrible conditions.”

To prove their points, the two in question lifted up their robe sleeves, revealing the tattooed numbers on their forearms. The Marauders just stared in shock, but Lily let out a small sob of horror. Ron decided to pick up the story.

“ ‘Mione and I were not too bad. We got used to it after a while, and they never really hurt us, although we did see a lot of horrible things. Harry and Gin weren’t so lucky.”

“ It wasn’t to bad for me,” Ginny continued, “ I was never hurt physically. In some ways, it was worse for me than it was for Harry. I had to sit and watch as they tortured him, the Muggle way, without magic...”

At this point Ginny started to sob, the tears allowing her to release some of the pain she had been keeping to herself since their rescue only months before. Although all of them seemed to have bounced back after their ordeals, they all had mental scars that would take a long time to heal. Harry pulled the sobbing girl into his lap and she buried her face in his shoulder as he gently stroked her back, mumbling nonsense words into her ear. After a few minutes, Harry looked up at the shocked and horrified faces of the Gryffindors and decided to rest his case.

“ It was a really bad time for us. We were there for over two months. I have scars all over my body from it, but the worst are on my back where they peeled my skin off. But they’re covered by a tattoo now, so they’re not as noticeable. Just remember, I will never, ever, join Voldemort, even if I am a Slytherin. So, do you think we can be friends?”

Harry held his hand out to the Marauders, who were watching him in respect. Slowly, James stepped forward and shook his hand firmly, the others soon following suit.

“ Gryffindors friends with a Slytherin? Now I’ve seen everything,” Sirius said, causing everyone to smile.

## Chapter Six – Joining the Quidditch Team

“ Again.”

“ Expecto Patronum.”

“ More forcefully. Again.”

“ Expecto Patronum.”

“ Think happy thoughts. Again.”

“ Yes, Peter Pan. Expecto Patronum!”

“ This isn’t working. Try once more and if it doesn’t work, I’ll try something else.”

“ EXPECTO PATRONUM!”

Harry shook his head in despair as Sev tried the spell for what seemed like the hundredth time. They had been working on the Patronus charm for an hour, with little success, and Harry was starting to get a headache. So far, his training of the younger Slytherin had gone rather well. It was two weeks into the term and Sev was already getting good at basic wandless magic. As he was the same age as Harry was when he learned the art, the older boy didn’t think he would have the same problems as Dumbledore. He expected the future Potions Master to be able to do most spells wandlessly by the end of the year. Over the last two weeks, the boys had set up a sort of training schedule. Sev would arrive at Harry’s room at eight, where they would spend an hour working with weapons, an hour on advanced spells that the fifth year may need but wouldn’t learn yet, and an hour preparing for Sev’s animagus transformation. He was progressing quickly in the animagus training, but he was finding the handling of weapons a little harder. Harry told him it was because he needed to get in shape. When the four time travellers had first started their training with the founders, they had been made to run laps of the lake every day to get fit. Harry had decided the week before that Sev would need to do the same if he was to ever progress. The younger boy had objected at first, but was now resigned to the fact that Harry wouldn’t give up.

At the weekends, Harry had decided to have an extra two hours a day with the other Slytherin in his room. He was teaching him advanced potions, which Sev was delighted about. Harry could now see the glee on Sev's face when he was given a challenging potion to brew, and could easily see why he had grown up to be such a good Potions Master. He had talent and an endless well of enthusiasm for the subject. Luckily, it was a passion Harry shared, and they often spent their evenings discussing theories and reactions that most in their years wouldn't be able to follow. Harry found it nice to have a like minded person to discuss such things with.

One thing Harry had vowed when he first started Sev's training was that he would avoid teaching him the Dark Arts as long as possible. It wasn't that he didn't want to share his knowledge, or feared they would be misused. It was more as a sign of respect to Dumbledore. He knew the old headmaster would agree with him training a younger student, but thought he would object if he was teaching the Dark Arts. While he tolerated Harry using them, he didn't think it would be wise to teach them to Sev, not without Dumbledore's approval. Not only that, if he taught a fifth year Dark Magic, and the other Slytherins found out, he would be seen as one of the Death Eaters. The news would soon spread around the school, and would eventually get back to the Marauders. His friendship with them was still tentative, and he didn't want to jeopardise that in any way.

After thinking over the spell he had been trying to teach his apprentice, which is what he classed Sev as, a small smirk spread over his face. Sev, who was watching his teacher avidly, paled at the look and started to slowly back away. Harry whirled around to face the retreating student, and waved his hand, muttering under his breath. His robes immediately changed to cover his whole form and as he started to move towards a very confused Sev, the younger boy felt his insides freeze and voices start to appear in his head. Backing up quickly, he soon found himself with his back against the wall. Seeing no way out, he started to panic. Lifting his wand and pointing it towards the advancing figure, he pictured in his mind the day Harry had told him he trusted him, and wanted to be his friend. The memory firm in his mind, Sev flourished his wand and called out the spell as forcefully as he could.

“EXPECTO PATRONUM!”

With a burst of brilliant light, a figure leapt from the wand and advanced on the now retreating Harry. With a wave of his enrobed hand, the Dementor façade disappeared and Harry stood before the trembling boy, a wide grin on his face.

“You did it Sev! I’m really proud of you.”

“What in Merlin was that?”

“That was a Dementor.”

“You turned yourself into a Dementor?”

“No, I just made it appear that way. All I did was change my robes and reproduce the effect they have on people. It was still me under there. I just thought that over the last hour you haven’t had the same motivation to get the spell right. I just thought a little encouragement was in order.”

“So you made me think you were a Dementor?! Are you mental?”

“No, I just thought that you needed a push in the right direction. You could do it, and I knew you could do it, you just needed to be shown that you could do it. Now, I think that’s enough for tonight.”

“But I haven’t had my animagus training!”

“I know, but that spell took a lot out of you, and you need your strength for tomorrow.”

“Why, what happens tomorrow?”

“We’re joining the quidditch team.”

“WHAT?!”

“You heard me.”

“But...why?”

“ Because I like quidditch. And it’s a good way of keeping in shape, and you need to get in shape fast. It’ll do you good.”

“ But...Potter plays quidditch...”

“ So?”

“ He’ll make fun of me...”

“ And if he does, hex him. Sev, you need to learn to stand up for yourself. I know you can do it. Believe me, if anyone can take care of themselves, it’s you. You just need to believe in yourself some more. You can do it, with a little time, effort and patience. Trust me.”

“ I do, Harry.”

“ I know.”

“ How do you know?”

“ Because a person’s Patronus takes the form of the thing they associate most with protection,” Harry said, gesturing to the glowing silver winged snow leopard prowling around the room.

\*~\*~\*

The next day found Harry and Sev standing on the quidditch pitch waiting for the rest of the Slytherin team to arrive. Some of the other House teams were already assembling for the tryouts, but the Slytherins were the last to arrive. While they were waiting, Harry had an idea. Tugging on Sev’s sleeve to get his attention, he nodded for him to follow and started to head to a specific area of the pitch. Sev followed, confused, until they stopped in front of a piece of grass.

“ Sev, I want to show you something that very few people know about.”

“ What?”

“ This,” Harry said, waving his hand over the ground and muttering a password. A slab of black onyx began to appear in the grass, with words materialising across it. Sev gasped in surprise.

“ What is it?”

“ It’s a dedication. It’s written in English, Anglo-Saxon and elvish.”

Sev looked at the part of the message that he could understand.

**To Gallatea Ravenclaw**

**A special gift for a special friend. I will remember you always.**

**From Harry Potter**

“ Wow. Wait a minute, you mean this was written by one of Potter’s ancestors?”

“ Yes, it was. Nearly a thousand years ago. Gallatea was the daughter of Rowena Ravenclaw, and was in love with Harry Potter.”

“ Why is it written in English? I mean, modern English?”

“ Alas, a question I cannot yet answer. I will tell you when you are older.”

“ You sound like Dumbledore.”

“ I learned from the best.”

“ What does the other inscription say?”

“ In loving memory of Gallatea Ravenclaw. Mother, friend and beloved daughter.”

“ You can read that? What language is it?”

“ The elven tongue.”

“ You know *that?*!”



“ I never said that. Just because I know what it says doesn't necessarily mean I can read it.”

“ True. Why did you show me this?”

“ Lets just say I may mention it in the future, and when I do you'll know what I'm talking about.”

Harry started to head back to where the quidditch team was gathering, leaving a very confused Sev to follow behind him.

\*~\*~\*

Once all of the teams and prospective players had gathered, Madame Hooch officially announced the start of the tryouts. While the captains were speaking to the prospective players, James sauntered over from the Gryffindor area and made a bee line for Severus, a smirk on his face. Harry noticed his approach and nudged his friend.

“ Do you want me to handle this?”

“ No, you were right with what you said yesterday. I have to learn to stand up for myself. I'll handle it.”

“ Good, but if he hurts you, or you need help, don't hesitate to ask.”

“ Thanks, Harry.”

By this time James had nearly reached them, and when he came to a stop in front of the pair, he nodded to Harry in greeting before turning to glare at Sev.

“ So, Snape, you're trying out for the team. If you get on it'll be nice to know that Gryffindor will be winning the cup.”

“ I wouldn't be so sure of their chances, *Potter*. After all, they have *you* on the team,” Sev drawled, a scowl on his face. Harry watched in amusement as he recognised a budding potions teacher.

“ Ohh, the little Slytherin's grown a backbone. I'm really scared.”

“ You should be. Delitrius Lingua.”

The spell hit James right in the stomach, and he bent over, grasping his midriff. When he straightened up and tried to reciprocate, his eyes widened in horror and he slapped his hand over his mouth. Harry was trying hard to keep a straight face, but it was a losing battle. When James removed his hand and tried to yell at Sev, but ended up making only vague gurgling sounds, he couldn't control himself any more. Bursting out laughing, he fell to the floor clutching his stomach. James gave him a betrayed look and stormed back over to his teammates. When Harry finally got himself under control, he turned to his apprentice, face beaming in pride.

“ That was brilliant, Sev. But did you really have to remove his tongue?”

“ Of course. He can't hex me, and he can't tell on me. I figured the silencing spell had already been tried, so this would be the next best thing. Anyway, he can get it put back if he goes to the hospital wing.”

“ You do know the assistant medic is his mother, right?”

“ Really? That cute witch? What's her name? Minh or something...”

“ Yeah, Minh. She's a good friend of mine. But I assure you, she'll see the funny side. So will his father. He's a good friend of mine, as well. They were both pranksters in their time at Hogwarts, back in the forties. They were the first generation of Marauders, you know?”

“ Really?

“ Yeah. They'll see the funny side. After all, when I told them about the silencing spell, they thought it was hilarious how it was pinned on them.”

“ You mean they didn't do it? Who did then?”

“ Well, I make a pretty good prankster myself.”

“ You did that?

“ Uhuh. I thought it was ingenious how I got them into trouble for it. They got detention, and I got the last laugh.”

“ I can’t believe it! You pulled a school wide prank, and you didn’t even get in trouble. How Slytherin of you.”

“ I’ll take that as a compliment. You want an example of what I like to do.”

“ Yeah, sure.”

Harry turned to the other side of the pitch, where the Gryffindor team and their new potential players were flying warm up laps. With a wave of his hand, they suddenly found themselves flying around on vacuum cleaners. Sev took one look and burst out laughing, gaining him some strange looks from his fellow Slytherins. In explanation, he simply pointed to the now yelling Gryffindors, causing his Housemates to fall on the ground in merriment.

\*~\*~\*

By the end of the tryouts, Harry and Sev had both made the team. Harry was the new Seeker, and Sev was a Chaser. They had thoroughly enjoyed themselves, usually at the Gryffindors’ expense, and Sev was warming up to the idea of playing the sport. As they were about to head up to the castle, a familiar figure sauntered up to them, sending a shiver down Sev’s spine. Harry simply stood his ground, staring blankly at the advancing seventh year.

“ So, I hear you both made the team. We’re guaranteed to lose now.”

“ Hello, Lucius, nice to see you again,” Harry said in a bored tone. Malfoy glared at him.

“ Nice prank on the Gryffindors. Are your loyalties starting to shift at last? Or are you still supporting the losing side?”

“ Are you trying to get a rise out of me, Lucius?”

“ Yes, I am. When are you going to stop acting like a noble Hufflepuff and start acting like a real Slytherin?”

“ Whatever do you mean?”

“ Like taking a weaker student under your wing. That’s more of a Hufflepuff trait, don’t you think. And we all know how weak the Hufflepuffs are...”

“ Are you calling me weak?” Harry demanded, and Sev spotted a rather disturbing glint in his eye.

“ Anyone who opposes the Dark Lord is weak. And you’ve already said what side you’re one. So yes, I’m calling you weak.”

Harry was starting to get angry. What right did Lucius Malfoy have to judge him? To call him weak? Harry wasn’t weak, far from it. And he was determined to prove his point.

“ Well, let us see who is weak. You and me. Right now. Light warrior against Death Eater. We’ll see how weak I am.”

“ Are you proposing a duel?” Lucius smirked, taking out his wand.

“ Indeed. An official wizard’s duel, with these people here as witnesses,” Harry answered, gesturing to the growing crowd.

“ So be it.”

Both lifted their wands and took ten paces back, getting into their proper duelling positions. One of the Hufflepuffs in the crowd ran to get the teachers as the rest stood back to avoid any stray curses. Sev watched nervously as the pair slightly inclined their heads to each other, neither breaking eye contact. In his lessons, Sev had seen some of what Harry was capable of, and knew he never wanted to face him in a duel.

It was Lucius Malfoy who threw the first curse, a tormenter. It was classed as Dark, but not punishable by an Azkaban sentence. Harry simply waved his wand and the spell dissipated. For the duel, he had vowed not to use wandless magic unless it could go unnoticed, as he

didn't want to give his secret away to the enemy, as he knew whatever Lucius saw would be reported back to Voldemort. Raising an invisible but powerful shield with an unnoticeable gesture of his hand, the only wandless magic he was prepared to use, he sent a Dark hex back at the smirking blond. When it hit, his left arm parted from his body and fell to the floor, leaving the vain aristocrat gaping in horror.

“ Are you regretting calling me weak, Lucius?”

“ Never. Impedimenta.”

The spell hit the shield and dissipated, and before he had chance to recover, Harry sent another Dark curse back at him, which caused his stomach to cramp in pain. Grabbing his middle, Lucius put up no resistance as Harry quickly disarmed him. From his position on the floor, Lucius looked up at the victorious boy, a look of fear in his eyes. But when Harry looked closer, he could see a clear calculating look veiled behind the fear. Lucius was up to something.

## Chapter Seven – Marauder Mischief

The Marauders never forgot what Harry and Severus did to James and the quidditch team the day of the tryouts. Although they were still friendly with Harry, they were secretly plotting a series of pranks aiming to get their own back for the humiliation of the vacuum cleaner incident. Harry had noticed that they were up to something, and knowing what the Marauders were like, he rightly assumed they were coming up with pranks. He spent a good portion of every evening coming up with counter strategies and defences against anything they might try. He had heard a great many stories from Sirius' letters over the summer before the amulet had taken them away about the sorts of pranks he used to get up to at school, so Harry knew more or less what to expect. Every evening, while Sev was trying to perfect his meditation for the animagus viewing spell, he would sit in the corner at his desk and plot. Having experience at detailed planning from the early days of the Order of the Phoenix, he came up with foolproof plans and embarrassing pranks that he couldn't wait to try out. Some evenings, Sev would even stay with him late into the night, giving a truly Slytherin perspective. Although Harry had been in the serpent's House for several weeks, he had still not fully developed his Slytherin cunning.

The first move came in the second week of October, when Harry went down to breakfast and found himself unable to speak. Every time he opened his mouth to speak to Sev, a loud lion's roar would come out. Sev was similarly afflicted, much to the amusement of the rest of the students, even their fellow Slytherins. Neither boy was popular in their own House, especially after Harry's humiliation of Lucius at the quidditch tryouts.

Revenge came the following day when the Marauders sat at the Gryffindor table. As soon as they touched their forks, a torrent of what could only be described as goo fell from the ceiling, covering them from head to toe. Leaping to their feet, they were further abused when hundreds of rotten rose petals rained onto them, sticking to the substance on their skin, which hardened after a few minutes. None of the teachers could remove the stuff, so the petal-covered students had to attend lessons as they were, smelling of rotten roses.

At dinner the following night, the four Marauders and Lily came striding over to the Slytherin table and headed straight for Sev and Harry. The pair stopped mid sentence when they spotted the advancing Gryffindors and turned to watch them as they came to rest opposite the two Slytherins.

“ This means war,” James stated.

“ We are the kings of pranks here, and you are threatening our title,” Sirius added.

“ We have come to propose a competition, a battle of the pranksters if you will,” Remus concluded.

Harry and Sev shared a look, before Harry clearly signaled to leave the talking to him. Turning to the Gryffindors, he prepared to set the conditions.

“ What are the rules?”

“ The Marauders against you two. A prank war to end all prank wars. A competition of skill, cunning and devilishness,” James stated.

“ We’ll accept on several conditions.”

“ What are they?” Sirius asked.

“ We want to be equally matched. I propose five people in each team, to make it fair. We will announce who those are before we start. No pranks to be played on people individually, for example, you can’t corner one person, you have to prank the whole team. Nothing dangerous, or permanent. And we need someone to judge.”

“ The students can decide, on Hallow’een. We will continue until October 31st, and at the feast the students can decide who wins,” Remus suggested.

“ Agreed. Who will be in your team?”

“ There’ll be me,” James started, “ Sirius, Remus, Peter and Lily. What about you?”

“ There’ll be me and Sev, obviously. Just a sec.”

Harry closed his eyes and sent a quick mental message to three other people.

~Ron, ‘Tea, Peeves? You interested in a prank war with the Marauders?~

~Sure~

~Count me in~

~Ok~

Opening his eyes, he looked at the confused looking Marauders and the thoughtful looking Lily.

“ Well, I have my team. Me, Sev, Ron, Peeves and Gallatea.”

“ Gallatea?” Lily asked.

“ Gallatea Ravenclaw.”

“ Who’s she?” Sirius questioned.

~‘Tea? Come here~

~Sure Harry~

A moment later the Grey Lady came floating over to the Slytherin table and waved to Harry.

“ Hi, Harry, what’s up?”

“ Just wanted to introduce you to the Marauders, the ones we will be having the prank war with. Everyone, this is Gallatea Ravenclaw.”

The Marauders, Lily and Sev gawped at the ghost, who gave them all a shy smile. Lily suddenly latched on to something.

“ She knew about the prank war. We just suggested it, but she knew, and she wasn’t here. How did she know?”



“ I told her.”

“ How?”

~I have my ways~

Lily jumped, startling the others a little. Her eyes widened as she looked at the boy opposite her.

“ You’re a telepath,” she breathed in awe. The other five looked at Harry in astonishment and respect.

“ You never told me,” Sev stated.

“ I never saw the need. Now you know. Don’t spread it around, or I’ll get angry. And you’ve seen me angry.”

The others all thought back to Harry’s clashes with Lucius Malfoy and shuddered at being on the receiving end of his wrath. Sirius then thought of two points that he thought were worth mentioning.

“ Wait a minute, how are you going to get Peeves to agree? He never listens to students. And how are we supposed to prank your whole team if two of them are ghosts?”

“ Peeves has already agreed, being a friend of ‘Tea’s, and you only have to prank the living members of our team. I’m not completely unreasonable.”

“ Very well. Do we have a deal?” Remus asked.

“ We have a deal. May the best team win.”

\*~\*~\*

Later that evening, Harry called a meeting of his fellow teammates in his room to discuss strategies. When Sev arrived that evening for his lessons, Harry had told him they were meeting the others. He was a little apprehensive at first about meeting with a Gryffindor, a poltergeist and the daughter of a founder. As these thoughts sped through his head, something suddenly hit him.

“ Harry?”

“ Yeah?”

“ The Grey Lady...is she the one mentioned on the stone in the quidditch pitch?”

“ Yes, she is.”

“ Can I ask her about Potter’s ancestor?”

“ Please, don’t. It’s rather a touchy subject. She was in love with him, and he had to leave her, breaking her heart. It upsets her when she has to talk about it, so if you want her help, I suggest you don’t mention it.”

“ Ok. How do you know so much about these things, Harry? I mean, if you’ve only been at Hogwarts for a little over a month, you won’t have had time to learn these things.”

“ Trust me, Sev, there are secrets I really want to share with you, but I can’t. It could be dangerous.”

“ Are you some sort of secret agent? An assassin of sorts?”

“ In a manner of speaking. I don’t have to teach you what I am, but I want to because you’re my friend. In return, all I want is that you don’t pry when I say I can’t tell you things.”

“ I know, Harry. I just wish you could trust me, that’s all.”

“ I do trust you, but a lot of the time these things are bigger than you and me. Too many lives are at stake, and I have no right to risk them.”

“ I understand. So, where will this meeting be?”

“ In a place that no-one can eavesdrop on us,” Harry said, before placing his hand on the nearest wall and creating a door. Sev watched in wonder as he was ushered through it, and they took their places in the armchairs on the far side. Sev looked around in

amazement at the collection of rare books until the other three turned up. Once everyone was seated, Harry pulled out his plans and set them on a large table.

“ Thank you all for coming. Now, as I’ve mentioned, the Marauders have declared war on us, and we have until Hallow’een to prove we are the better pranksters. I have chosen you all because we represent all four Houses, giving us a wider range of ideas and capabilities. This will be the Marauders’ downfall. They are all rash and impulsive, if stupidly brave, Gryffindors. In our team, we have Ron, a Gryffindor who can provide good ideas and inside information on the Marauders’ tactics. He can also bring us some of the Gryffindor impulsiveness. We have Gallatea, a Ravenclaw through and through, who is a good tactician and has the brains and knowledge to come up with foolproof pranks. We have Sev, the Slytherin, who will provide cunning and sneakiness. And lastly, we have Peeves, a Hufflepuff with nearly a thousand years of experience at pranking people. We have an unbeatable team, and never forget that. Now, let’s get to work.”

\*~\*~\*

The morning of the 16th October dawned and the Hogwarts students headed down to breakfast without a care in the world. As Harry and Ron headed for their tables, they performed several powerful wandless counter charms, getting rid of any enchantments they may fall pray to. They could tell their spells were eliminating something the Marauders had set up, but they weren’t sure what. The night before they had agreed to start on a high, so they had planned their greatest prank for that morning. When the Marauders and Lily entered the room, they looked at the other three in confusion, obviously wondering why their prank hadn’t worked. As soon as they took swigs of their pumpkin juice, their eyes bulged when they realised it had been spiked. Within seconds, they were standing up at the table, and music started to waft through the doors of the Great Hall, catching the attention of the teachers and students. Harry’s team members all glanced up at the headmaster, and were pleased to see a look of anticipation in his eyes. He had obviously figured out that a prank was coming, and was looking forward to what was about to happen.

Over at the Gryffindor table, the five with the spiked drinks were staring around the room in horror, before their clothes suddenly changed into very revealing dresses, and they started to dance the cancan. The four boys were beat red as they performed a dance number worthy of the Moulin Rouge, before bounding up to the teachers' table and pulling them up to dance with them. They were mortified by the suggestive moves they were pulling on their bemused professors, although Dumbledore seemed to be enjoying himself, dancing enthusiastically with Lily. Professors McGonagall and Flitwick were protesting loudly, and Trelawney was telling Sewell that she had seen it coming all along. By the time the dance came to an end the whole school was laughing loudly at the five embarrassed students, and Ginny was squealing in delight over the number of pictures she had been taking. Harry had told her the night before about the prank war, and she had promised to document the whole thing to make a new album.

Harry 1 – Marauders 0

\*~\*~\*

The next day, the Marauders were a little more cautious. They sniffed their drinks before drinking them and got other students to test their food before they ate. Breakfast passed uneventfully enough, but when they got to potions, Sev threw some choice ingredients into their cauldrons. The potions looked the same as what they had been trying to make, but when they tested them, they found their concoctions had become mild truth potions. They had the effect of making the five afflicted students spout out humiliating pieces of information, seemingly at random and without prompting. The other students all found it funny, but the teachers weren't amused, and Professor Sewell wouldn't give them the antidote. Gryffindor lost a lot of points that day from various teachers whose lessons were interrupted by such things as Sirius claiming he found Professor Sinistra highly attractive, James saying he was the one who once turned Dumbledore's beard pink and Lily claiming she had a painful boil in a rather private place. By the end of the day, the five had locked themselves in Gryffindor Tower, too ashamed to leave.

Harry 2 – Marauders 0

\*~\*~\*

The third day of the prank war saw the Marauders making a comeback. During Herbology, Ron and Harry were attacked by a seemingly docile plant that had been enchanted to kiss the pair of them rather viciously. Sev had met the same fate when he had the class later in the day, and all three came to dinner that evening with oddly shaped love bites all over their faces and arms, making the rest of the student body avoid them, thinking they had contracted something contagious. Harry was livid. He hated being caught unawares, knowing that in a battle it could cost him his life. For the next day he planned something extra special.

## Harry 2 – Marauders 1

\*~\*~\*

The other students had realised by the fourth day what was going on. They thought the whole thing was wonderful, as the two teams spent so much time pranking each other that they left the rest of the school alone. Even Peeves, being part of Harry's team, wasn't causing the same mayhem as he usually did, much to the Bloody Baron's relief. Dumbledore seemed to find the whole fiasco highly amusing, and many of the teachers were taking bets on who would win. The Marauders had been firm favourites from the start, as everyone had been subjected to their pranks for over four years, and knew what they were capable of. However, some of them were slowly changing their minds, especially when they saw the latest Harry's team came up with.

Most of the day went quietly, with Harry and Ron disabling all of the set up enchantments the Marauders had tried to trap them with. They had decided to get their own back for the gruesome plants at dinner. When everyone filed in that evening, there was a lot of tension. Nothing had happened all day, so they were expecting dinner to be the time when the pranksters would strike. Sure enough, half way through dessert the Marauders and Lily leapt onto their table dressed in frilly red lingerie and started to sing, taking a verse each and joining together in the chorus. As the song started with James, they danced suggestively with each other.

“ I love myself  
 I want you to love me  
 When I'm feelin' down  
 I want you above me  
 I search myself  
 I want you to find me  
 I forget myself  
 I want you to remind me.”

All five grouped together to sing the chorus.

“ I don't want anybody else  
 When I think about you  
 I don't touch myself  
 I don't want anybody else  
 Oh no, oh no, oh no.”

Remus was next in line, stepping in front of the other three and moving erotically, making some of the first years turn bright red.

“ You're the one who makes me happy honey  
 You're the sun who makes me shine  
 When you're around I'm always laughing  
 I want to make you mine.”

Lily took the next part, dancing with Sirius.

“ I close my eyes  
 And see you before me  
 Think I would die  
 If you were to ignore me  
 A fool could see  
 Just how much I adore you  
 I get down on my knees  
 I'd do anything for you.”

“ I don't want anybody else  
 When I think about you  
 I don't touch myself  
 I don't want anybody else  
 Oh no, oh no, oh no.”

Peter took the next verse, pulling a second year onto the table and pulling them into an embrace.

“ I love myself  
I want you to love me  
When I'm feelin' down  
I want you above me  
I search myself  
I want you to find me  
I forget myself  
I want you to remind me.”

“ I don't want anybody else  
When I think about you  
I touch myself  
I don't want anybody else  
Oh no, oh no, oh no.”

Sirius was the last to sing, jumping off the table and running up to the teachers, before sitting in Minerva's lap and gyrating, causing the Transfiguration professor to turn bright red.

“ I want you  
I don't want anybody else  
And when I think about you  
I touch myself  
Ooh, oooh, ooooooh, aaaaaah.”

“ I don't want anybody else  
When I think about you  
I touch myself  
I don't want anybody else  
Oh no, oh no, oh no.”

As the song ended and the five came back to their senses, they were still dressed in the revealing underwear, and made a hasty and mortified retreat to their dormitories.

## Harry 3 – Marauders 1

\*~\*~\*

Life continued much the same way for the next couple of weeks. Prank after prank was played, Harry's team being the clear winners, although the Marauders did put up a good fight. However, one evening during dinner, only three days before Halloween, Harry's meal was interrupted by Ginny. She had been sitting at the Ravenclaw table, happily chatting with Gallatea about rather inane subjects, when she was suddenly hit with a vision. As soon as it was over, she turned fearful eyes to the concerned ghost. Sending Harry a mental nudge, she waited for him to establish a link. Before he had time to ask what was going on, she sent a frantic message.

~Harry, call an Order meeting. Voldemort's going to attack St Mungo's~



## Chapter Eight – Ronald Nightingale

~Harry, call an Order meeting. Voldemort's going to attack St Mungo's~

As soon as he received the message, he sent out a call to all of the Order members and prepared to get up and leave. He caught the confused look on Sev's face and quickly explained.

"Sev, I have to go somewhere and do something. I'll see you later."

"What brought this on? It seemed rather sudden..."

"Got a message from someone that I had to go. Sorry."

"A mental one?"

"Yeah."

"Oh, alright. I'll see you later then."

Harry leapt to his feet and looked up at the head table, where Dumbledore was looking back at him intently, questioning him with his eyes.

~Ginny had a vision. Voldemort's going to attack St Mungo's. We need to have a meeting~

Dumbledore nodded slightly and made his way out of the Great Hall, the other teachers in the Order following right behind him. As soon as they were out of the Hall and into a deserted corridor, Harry created a door to his room and held it open while everyone filed in. Just as the last teacher entered, Minh, Ron, Ginny, Hermione and a couple of other students who were in the Order came running from different directions and slipped through the door, before Harry went in and closed it behind himself. Making his way to the fireplace, Harry waited for everyone else to disappear before flooing to Domus Corvus Corax.

When they all went into the ball room, they were met by a crowd of rather anxious looking people. Harry had sent out a more urgent call,

with more tingling than for a normal meeting, to make sure people came as soon as possible. When the group from Hogwarts arrived, everyone took their seats and waited for Dumbledore to speak. They stayed like that for several minutes until the headmaster was satisfied that everyone was there before standing.

“ Thank you all for coming at such short notice. I must admit I am as bemused as you about the purpose of this meeting, so I’m going to turn you over to Harry, who should be able to tell you more.”

Harry looked in surprise at the headmaster before standing up in front of the expectant Order.

“ I called you all here because Ginny, who is a true Seer, has had a vision of an attack by Voldemort on St Mungo’s Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries. Ginny, can you tell us what you Saw?”

“ Voldemort is planning to attack St Mungo’s in two days time. He wants to cause as much havoc as possible, and he knows that a lot of people will be there on Hallow’een to visit their families. From what I could See, the attack will be in the morning, about ten or eleven o’clock, and with him he will have about thirty Death Eaters, fifty Dementors, and several vampires and werewolves.”

“ Hallow’een? Why does it always have to be Hallow’een?” Harry muttered, “Thank you Ginny. Now, obviously we need to plan a counter attack before then, and we need to organise positions we will be fighting from. Who can conjure a corporeal Patronus?”

Only about a dozen people raised their hands, making Harry sigh in frustration.

“ Alright, that’s not many but it will have to do. Those of you who can conjure a Patronus will need to be fighting the Dementors. Don’t worry, my friends and I drove off a load of them at the Battle of Paris in 1944, so it shouldn’t be too bad. I want the Aurors to concentrate on the Death Eaters, as well as the other Ministry officials. All non-humans, I would like you to fight the vampires and werewolves. Anyone with healing experience, I need you to stay here and deal with casualties. Current Hogwarts students and recent

graduates, I need you to make trips backwards and forwards, bringing in the dead and injured. Are we all clear?"

" I have a question."

" Yes, Mr....."

" Longbottom. Frank Longbottom."

Harry froze when he heard the name. He suddenly pictured the trial of Bellatrix Lestrange he had seen in Dumbledore's penseive when she was charged with torturing Frank and his wife Alice to insanity. Shaking his head a little, he tried not to dwell on the future.

" Yes, you had a question, Mr. Longbottom."

" I was just wondering how we can base our whole meeting on a vision. Are you sure it will come true?"

" Yes, I am. Ginny has never been wrong before."

" Alright, I just wanted to check."

" Rest assured, if Ginny says something will happen, then it will happen. You don't have to worry. Now, are there any more questions? No? Alright, we'll meet again tomorrow at eight pm, by which time we should have a more concrete plan. Meeting adjourned."

\*~\*~\*

As soon as Harry returned to Hogwarts he headed down to his room, where he found Sev sitting on his bed waiting for him. He had given the younger boy permission to enter whenever he wished, as long as he didn't abuse the privilege. As soon as he entered, Sev stood and headed over to his friend.

" Are you alright, Harry? You left rather abruptly. I've been worried."

" I'm fine, Sev. But I've had a rather depressing evening. I feel like planning our next prank on the Marauders."

“ Sure, what do you have in mind?”

“ Well, there’s a charm of my own invention...”

“ You invented a charm?”

“ I’ve come up with a few spells. I have a talent for it.”

“ You seem to have a talent for a lot of things.”

“ Yeah, well, I do. I’ve very powerful, you know. Even more so than Dumbledore and Voldemort.”

“ And so modest!”

“ Hey! You wanted to know. I have raw power, and I know how to use it. I think my friends expect me to turn into the next Dark Lord or something. I scare them sometimes, you know.”

“ Well, overconfidence is a weakness.”

“ That’s what ‘Mione tells me.”

“ She’s a wise one, Hermione. You should listen to her.”

“ Yeah, whatever, so this prank. It’s called the Julio-Claudian jinx.”

\*~\*~\*

The following day, students and teachers alike were startled when the Marauders and Lily came strolling into the Great Hall at breakfast dressed as Roman nobles. They all had wreaths of leaves around their heads and colourful togas in place of their school robes, and the way they held themselves spoke of royalty. Everyone watched in confusion as James strode over to the Gryffindor table and started yelling at some of the scared first years.

“ Arise, plebian, and give me your seat, for I am the mighty Augustus Caesar, ruler of all.”

“ You do not rule all,” Remus called in outrage, “ For I, the mighty Emperor Tiberius, hold sway over these lands.”

“ So you think, mortal, for I am the God known to you mere mortals as Gaius Caligula, the greatest Emperor of them all,” Sirius exclaimed. Peter whacked him across the head and stuttered out his own line.

“ I, Clau-Clau-Claudius, command thee to submit to my power.”

“ I AM THE MOST POWERFUL! I, Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, the renowned Emperor Nero, will put you all to death,” Lily stated, brandishing a sword.

At the Slytherin table, all of the students were in fits of laughter as Harry explained that for the whole day, the five Gryffindors would believe themselves to be different Roman Emperors. After a few minutes, the other Houses started to see the funny side when Sirius and Peter started to argue.

“ I am the God Caligula. All bow before me.”

“ Ne-ne-nephew? I believe that I, Tiberius Claudius Nero Drusus Germanicus, am the Em-Em-Emperor. I rule all, and all sh-sh-sh-should bow be-before me.”

“ I am a god, you are a mere Emperor. I should be worshiped. You,” Sirius yelled, pointing to some rather petrified second years, “ Build me a temple from whenst you shall worship me, and I shall make you Senators.”

The prank continued in much the same way for the rest of the day. Gryffindor lost a large number of points and Ginny got a lot of amusing pictures, which she developed at the end of the day and stuck up all over the school, much to the embarrassment of the Marauders when they woke up the next day and realised what they had done.

\*~\*~\*

The 30th October dawned and the pranksters realised that it was the last day of the competition. They had 24 hours to do as much damage as possible, and they intended to make the most of it. Harry, Sev and Ron all woke up with lion tails, which stuck out of the back

of their robes for the whole day, making sitting in lessons and quidditch practice very uncomfortable. They were also attacked by a swarm of enchanted bees as soon as they went outside for Care of Magical Creatures. By the end of the day they were all in foul moods, despite the fact that Harry and Ron had managed to prevent some of the Marauders' pranks from going off.

The Marauders in question had also had a bad day. Ron had enchanted their clothes to appear invisible to all but those wearing them, and each other. There was a lot of commotion when they had gone down to breakfast that morning, appearing to be wearing nothing. When they had looked at their own robes, or each other's, they saw only the plain black robes that were always there. The teachers had given them all a week of detentions for something they didn't even realise they were doing, which cheered up the betailed and stung pranksters.

By the end of the day, so many pranks had been thrown backwards and forwards that Sev and Lily ended up in the hospital wing with fungus growing all over their skin. The teachers weren't amused on the whole, but Harry caught Dumbledore's eye at dinner and saw that he found the whole thing highly entertaining.

\*~\*~\*

The morning of the 31st Harry got up especially early to have a thorough work out before the battle later in the day. He spent the three hours before breakfast training with weapons, martial arts and spells in his room. Since the time of the founders, the room had been equipped with a padded floor in the centre and various training aids, all of which he took full advantage of. By the time breakfast came around, the adrenalin was pumping through him and he was as prepared for battle as he would ever be.

The Order members in the Great Hall that morning were all rather subdued, as were the Marauders, but all for different reasons. James, Sirius, Remus, Peter and Lily were all worried about the results of the competition that were to be announced that evening at the feast. Hallow'een itself had been declared a prank free day, much to the relief of Ron and Harry, who had enough to worry about without

having the added concern of not going into battle with boils or tentacles, or any such thing.

After breakfast, the four time travellers went up to Harry's room to wait for nine thirty, when they were due to leave for St. Mungo's. Ron, Hermione and Ginny were nervous, but Harry was wandering around the room in a decidedly restless manner. After his seventeenth lap, Ron decided to stop him.

" Harry, sit down. You're making me dizzy."

" Sorry, Ron. I'm just excited."

" Excited?! Harry, we're going into battle. People are probably going to die. We might die. Aren't you worried?"

" Not really, 'Mione. I mean, no-one's been able to kill me before, so what makes you think they will this time."

" Harry, you shouldn't be so cocky. It will make you sloppy, and might just cost you dearly."

" Oh, lighten up, 'Mione. We've been in battles before."

" Yes, I distinctly remember the one after which we ended up as prisoners for two months. It might have slipped your mind. You were tortured, remember?" Ginny whispered.

" Well, we won't make that mistake again."

" Harry, what's gotten into you? At the end of the last school year, you were a wreck. Spouting off about how the torture reminded you how you were human, and not invincible. Now you seem ten times worse than you were before."

" I'm fine, Hermione. Stop sticking your nose in."

" I'm just concerned, Harry. If you're not careful you'll turn evil, I can see it coming."

“ I thought Ginny was the Seer, not you. You know nothing about me, Hermione, so stop making wild accusations.”

“ I agree with her, Harry.”

“ Me too.”

“ So now you’re all against me. That’s just great. I don’t need you. I don’t need any of you.”

Harry made to storm out of the room in rage, but ‘Tea’s voice interrupted his stride. He hadn’t even noticed she was there, and he stopped in surprise when he heard her.

“ Harry’s they’re right. I don’t like the person you’re turning into, and when I look at you now, I’m glad Glenadade never met you, because he would have been disappointed.”

“ I’m the same as I’ve always been, ‘Tea,” he said without turning to face her.

“ No, you’re not. I don’t know why, but you’re different. It might be the Dark Arts, it might be Slytherin, or it might just be your rage at the world for the injustices you have suffered. You have been forced to grow up too quickly; you have been made to fight men’s battles in men’s wars. You have been captured and tortured. You have lived your life without a loving family, and as soon as you found your godfather you were ripped away from him on a trip you never asked for. You met people on your journey, only to have them die, leaving you alone. I can see why you are angry at the world, but don’t let that be your undoing. Please, Harry.”

Harry didn’t say anything, but simply walked out of the room without looking back. What the others didn’t see was the single tear making its way slowly down his cheek.

\*~\*~\*

At nine thirty, the Order of the Phoenix gathered in a street in London where St Mungo’s Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries was situated. It was inside what appeared to be a closed department



store, a disguise designed to keep away prying Muggles. The street itself had been closed at either end by the Order to keep stray Muggles from wandering into the battle. Everyone had gotten into position depending on the roles allocated to them by Harry three days before, and the time travellers were scattered around to spread the effects of their abilities.

Harry was standing off to one side, where he knew the Dementors were to be. The others around him were all getting ready to fight, but Harry couldn't concentrate on anything. What Gallatea had said about him being angry at the world and his son being disappointed had struck a nerve, although he would never admit that to the others. When he thought it over properly, he could see what they were getting at. He had been awfully self confident and arrogant over the last few months, and if he was truly honest with himself, he didn't like what he had become any more than his friends did. He thought about how Tom Riddle's anger over having to live in an orphanage had made him turn into the monster Harry would be facing in a short while. That thought frightened him more than anything.

At ten o'clock, Harry was roused from his thoughts by many \*pop\*s as the Death Eaters apparated in, the Dementors appearing right behind them. Voldemort was in the lead, and he looked rather startled when he saw the Order members gathered before him and already firing curses at his side. With a roar of rage, he started sending out a volley of Killing curses. Harry immediately leapt into action, creating several Patroni, which all flocked towards the Dementors with a menagerie of other beasts from those who were capable of conjuring them.

After several minutes, Harry realised the Dementors were retreating, and decided to throw himself into the main battle. Changing into his animagus form, he leapt at the nearest vampire and started ripping it to shreds. After his third, he looked over at the centre of the battle to see what Voldemort was up to, and noticed he was in an intense duel with Dumbledore. Thinking quickly, Harry turned back into his human form and started concentrating on sending wave after wave of pain into Voldemort's Dark Mark. He watched in satisfaction as the Dark Lord stumbled back and grabbed his arm in pain, before trying to curse the headmaster again. However, the damage was done, and

Dumbledore was starting to get the upper hand. Voldemort couldn't concentrate properly on the duel, as the continuous pain in his arm was distracting him. After a few minutes, he started to move back away from his opponent, looking for an exit.

Meanwhile, Harry had stopped in the middle of the battle to concentrate on incapacitating the Dark Lord. While it was proving helpful to Dumbledore, and ultimately everyone else, as without Voldemort to guide them the Death Eaters were unorganised, Harry was placing himself in a very vulnerable position. He was so focused on what he was doing that he never noticed the vampire coming up behind him until it latched itself onto his neck. He immediately tried to fight back, but it sank its claws into his chest, filling him with a sharp pain. Before he lost consciousness he felt something warm on his lips as he coughed up blood, saw a hex dislodge the creature gripping him, and spotted a nearby Death Eater send various spells his way. The last thing he saw before the darkness overtook him was Ron running towards him.

\*~\*~\*

He saw Harry from the other side of the battlefield, concentrating hard. Although he didn't catch on immediately, as soon as Voldemort let out a cry of pain, Ron whipped his head around and saw him clutching his arm. *That's it, he thought, he's distracting him.* Turning back to his friend, Ron started to make his way across the field to cover Harry while he was in such a vulnerable position. Before he could get there, a vampire jumped out of nowhere and started attacking the green eyed boy. Breaking out in a run, Ron wandlessly sent a powerful hex at the creature, knocking it away from his best friend. He watched, helpless, as the Death Eater sent Dark curse after Dark curse Harry's way, before he felled him with a well aimed Stunning curse.

Ron fell to his knees when he reached the Boy-Who-Lived, placing two shaking fingers to his wrist in a frantic search for a pulse. Finding one, albeit very faint, the red haired boy did what instinct told him to do. Holding his cupped hands over the still form of his dying friend, he started to will the injuries away. After a few precious minutes, a soft blue glow encompassed his hands and spread to the wounded

boy, repairing some of the more serious damage, just enough to cure some of the fatal injuries. After a few minutes, Ron felt exhaustion fill him, before he collapsed unconscious on top of his friend.

## Chapter Nine – Consequences of Battle

Ron awoke with a pounding headache. Opening his eyes, he groaned as the bright light of the hospital wing hit him full in the face. He could hear excited voices all around him, but the pain in his head kept him from concentrating on any one. Fragments of conversations filtered through his tired brain, but made little sense to him.

“...a week...glad...exhausted...”

“Wish...Harry...still asleep.”

“Now...awake...what...battle...”

“Do you...hear...talk...us?”

“...give...bit...time...”

“Took...out...him....”

With a groan, Ron turned over on his side away from the voices and fell into a deep natural sleep.

\*~\*~\*

The next time he awoke, Ron found that the pain in his head, while still there, had considerably lessened. When he opened his eyes this time, two blurry shapes appeared above him, one taking each of his hands. He assumed the brown blob to be Hermione, and the red one to be Ginny, although he couldn't make their faces out. As he adjusted to the light, the blurring of his vision lessened until he could see his two friends clearly. Both wore relieved looks on their faces, but Ron could still detect a deep worry buried in their expressions. He needed to find out what was going on. He couldn't remember much of the battle, nor could he remember why he was in there. There was only one obvious question.

“What happened?”

Hermione exchanged a look with Ginny, and it appeared as if they were deciding who would explain it to him. As the silent conversation ended, Hermione sighed and turned to her boyfriend.

“ You’re in the hospital wing at Domus Corvus Corax. You’ve been here for the last two weeks. You woke up briefly on Monday, but went back to sleep before we had chance to talk to you. Can you remember what happened at the battle?”

Ron thought hard, coming up with very little. His memories of the last few minutes before he fell unconscious were hazy at best. The last thing he remembered clearly was...

“ Harry! Harry got attacked!”

“ That’s right. Is that the last you remember?” Ginny prompted.

Ron concentrated on the images swimming in his head, but none became any clearer.

“ That’s it. Everything else is a blur. I can remember Harry being attacked by...a vampire?”

“ Yes, that’s right. From where I was standing, I saw you run and help him, but he got hit with some curses. You did...something...to him, but we don’t know what. Then you collapsed in exhaustion,” Hermione told him.

This new information filled in some of the blanks in Ron’s memory and some of the details started to come back to him.

“ I remember some of it, now you mention it. I did something with my hands. They started to glow. I could see he was hurt bad, and I wanted to heal him, but I didn’t know how. Harry’s the one that knows all of that elven healing magic, not me. I felt so helpless, and I just...*willed*...him to get better. I think some of the more serious injuries healed, but then I started to feel really tired, and I couldn’t keep it up anymore.”

“ You must have worn yourself out doing...whatever it was you did. I’ve never heard of anything like it before, I’ll have to ask

Professor Dumbledore when he comes back. He's been to visit every day to check on your progress. Ginny and I have been here all the time."

"Aren't you missing school?"

"You're more important than school. We were going to have you moved to Hogwarts, but Minh thought it would do more damage to Harry if we moved him."

"Harry! Of course! How is he? Where is he? Can I speak to him?"

The two girls looked to the floor. They had been dreading telling Ron what had happened to his best friend, but knew they could put it off no longer. It was Ginny who spoke up.

"Ron, Harry's...he can't talk to you. The vampire attack was more serious than it at first appeared. And he sustained damage from the curses thrown at him by the Death Eater."

"Don't tell me he didn't make it...he had to have made it. Right?"

"Oh, he's still alive. Sort of..."

"SORT OF! Ginny, tell me."

"He hasn't woken up yet. Whatever you did to him stopped him from dying, and Minh and Madame Pomfrey have done all they can to heal the physical injuries. Ron, he's unresponsive."

"Meaning..."

"He's in a coma."

\*~\*~\*

Meanwhile, back at Hogwarts, Sev was getting decidedly worried. A little over two weeks ago, Harry had walked out of the Hall, telling him he had something to do. Two days later he had vanished from Hogwarts without a trace. Sev had a horrible feeling in his gut that something really serious had happened to his friend. He knew Harry

was violently opposed to the Dark Lord, and he also knew from his father Satanus, one of Voldemort's most trusted Death Eaters, that there was an attack planned for Hallow'een. He hadn't heard in advance, but the morning of the 31st, a letter had arrived from home telling him of the attack, and to hope his father did well to serve his master. Sev was disgusted with the whole thing, but having gone through this for many attacks over the years, thought little of it. However, when Harry never came back on Hallow'een, he started to suspect that Harry had been there, on the opposite side from his father. The fact that his only friend had never come back again made Sev rather nervous.

News of the battle had been all over the Daily Prophet the following day, claiming that a secret organisation believed to be led by Dumbledore had fought back the Death Eaters and saved St Mungo's. It had also mentioned that there had been several casualties on both sides. When he had first seen the headline, Sev had been relieved. Although Satanus Snape was as loyal as a Death Eater could be, Severus had no desire to follow in his footsteps. He hated everything about the Dark Lord, but knew the time would come when his father would take him to a meeting for his initiation. There was nothing he could do about it, and he knew it. When he saw the headline, he was pleased that the Death Eaters had lost, but when he noticed that there had been casualties, and Harry hadn't returned, he started to panic.

Although Sev knew the situation with his father was hopeless, and that he would be forced to choose between serving the Dark Lord and losing his life, his friendship with Harry had brought him hope. Hope of a better future, where he could make a difference, and someday be free of the ties of blood that were forcing him into a corner. The training Harry was giving him had started to pay off. Sev was much more confident, and sure he could live through the war to someday redeem himself for the crimes he was destined to commit in Voldemort's name. Harry was his ray of light in a dark world, and to lose him now would shatter the boy beyond all recognition.

As he headed down the corridor on the way to Potions, he heard the pounding of feet behind him and a heavy hand landing on his

shoulder. Looking up, he was surprised to see James Potter looking back at him.

“Snape, can we have a word?”

“I don’t have anything to say to you, Potter,” the Slytherin spat.

“Now, don’t be like that. We were just wondering if you knew where Harry and his friends were. Nobody’s seen any of them in two weeks, and we were starting to worry.”

“Harry’s friends are missing? Hermione, Ron and Ginny? I hadn’t noticed, but now that you mention it...”

“So, do you know anything, Snivellus?” Sirius demanded, starting to get impatient.

“Not a lot, Black. But why should I tell you?”

“Because we’re friends with the four of them, and we’re concerned. I’m sure you’re worried about Harry,” Lily put in.

“Fine, follow me,” Sev said, leading them down the corridor and into a deserted classroom. After spelling the door shut and casting a strong silencing spell, he turned to his Gryffindor rivals.

“First of all, what do you five know?” he demanded. Remus was the one to speak up, having decided to take over the conversation, as he was known as the most level headed one of the group.

“We don’t know anything, Severus. The last we saw of them was Hallow’een at breakfast. Ron said something to us about being gone for the morning, but that he would be back in the afternoon. He left about nine o’clock, and we haven’t seen him or the others since.”

“Well, I don’t really know anything more than you, Lupin, but I have my suspicions. I can’t speak for the other three, as I don’t know them very well, but Harry’s strongly opposed to You-Know-Who. He hates him with a vengeance, but he never told me why...”



“ We know. He told us not to tell anyone, though,” Sirius said with a smirk, earning himself a scowl from Sev.

“ Tell me. It might give me some ideas about the situation.”

“ Alright,” Lily said, “ But don’t tell him we told you. Sometime last year he was captured by Dark wizards and held captive for two months, where they tortured him. The Muggle way. He’s covered in scars from it; I’m surprised you never noticed. Anyway, he didn’t say who it was, but he said it gave him a grudge against Dark Lords in general. The only explanation is that he was captured by You-Know-Who and his followers.”

Severus could only stare at the girl in horror. Harry had never told him why he fought Voldemort’s side so fiercely, but now he knew. A knot of guilt started to form in his stomach when he realised that one day he would be the enemy. Harry would hate him like he hated those who tortured him. As his thoughts began to spin out of control, Remus asked again what the Marauders had been wanting to know.

“ So, Severus, do you know where they might be?”

“ Um...well, the only thing I could think of was the battle. You know, the one at St Mungo’s? It was on Hallow’een, and that was the day they all disappeared. If Harry wants to oppose He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, then the best way to do it would be by fighting in a battle like that.”

Realisation suddenly spread across the faces of the five Gryffindors as it occurred to them that their arch enemy was right. It was the only logical explanation. Thinking back to the article, their thoughts, like Sev’s, lingered on the part about the casualties.

“ You don’t think...,” James started.

“ I don’t know. There’s only one way to find out. We’ll have to ask Dumbledore.”

\*~\*~\*

At dinner that evening, the headmaster was surprised to see six students rise from their tables and head towards him as a group. He would never have expected to see those particular students joining forces for any purpose, but he soon realised what they all had in common. The missing time travellers. Before they reached the head table, Dumbledore stood from his place and met them on his way out of the Hall. With a gesture, they followed close behind until they reached the confines of the headmaster's office. Once they were all seated, and the customary sweets had been offered, Dumbledore grew more serious.

"Now, I'm assuming you six want to know what happened to four of your friends. Am I right?"

"Yes, sir. We noticed they were missing two weeks ago, but thought they would be back by now. It was only when we cornered Snape and asked him about Harry that we decided to come to you. Snape said they might have been in that battle," James said.

"Indeed they were, Mr. Potter. However, I am not at liberty to tell you much, as it is all top secret. However, as you are concerned for your friends, I will tell you what I can. Miss Sollers and Miss Weatherby are perfectly fine. They suffered only minor cuts and bruises, nothing too serious. Mr. Weatherby was injured a little, and was knocked unconscious for two weeks. As a matter of fact, he awoke only this morning. Mr. Anguifer, I'm afraid, is not doing so well. He was hit with several Dark curses, and was physically attacked by a vampire. Although his injuries have been healed, he is currently in a coma."

Dumbledore sat back and looked at the effect his words had had upon the students in front of him. Sirius and James seemed rather subdued, with sorrow in their eyes. Remus looked shocked, and rather upset. Lily had tears falling down her face, and had her hand over her mouth. Peter looked indifferent, which surprised Dumbledore a little. Sev, on the other hand, looked deeply upset. Dumbledore knew from his observations of the students that he and Harry were good friends, and so the headmaster knew the news would have a profound effect on the young boy. With a deep

sigh, Dumbledore closed his eyes and thought of how much pain one battle could cause.

\*~\*~\*

It was the first week of December when Harry finally stirred. As the darkness that had enveloped him for the last five weeks finally parted, his head was filled with excited chatter and several people trying to pat his hands. Opening his eyes cautiously, he was met with five grinning faces. As expected, Ron, Ginny and Hermione had spent hour upon hour sitting at his bedside, waiting for him to wake up. Dumbledore was also there, beaming down at his student in relief. The one that surprised Harry was Sev. He was standing a little apart from the others, as if he felt himself to be intruding. Harry just smiled at him encouragingly and motioned him forward while the others were chattering. Tuning back into the conversation, Harry heard Hermione going on about how much schoolwork he had missed, and how he might have to repeat sixth year. After a few minutes, the Boy-Who-Lived became a little irritated, and held his hand up, silencing the girl.

“ Could someone please just tell me what happened.”

“ Of course, my boy. What is the last thing you remember?”  
Dumbledore asked.

“ Pain. A lot of pain. I was attacked from behind. And then curses....”

“ That’s right, Harry. Now, I have a lot to tell you, and I want you to try and stay calm. Some of this may be hard for you to hear, and for that I am truly sorry. Your friends here all know about your condition, but if you would rather I tell you in private...”

“ No, it’s fine, sir.”

The way Dumbledore was speaking had Harry a little scared. It sounded as if what had happened to him would have a big effect on his life. He felt he needed his friends close with him, just in case the news was too much for him to handle. After giving Harry a few

minutes to prepare himself for the news, Dumbledore started to explain.

“ Harry, from what we have been able to piece together, at the battle you were attacked from behind by a vampire while you were...distracting...the Dark Lord. This is where your worst injuries came from. It hit you, draining you of a lot of blood, and scratched long gashes in your chest. You were then hit by several Dark curses by a nearby Death Eater. Mr. Weatherby went to your aid, and performed a rather remarkable piece of magic...”

“ Hey, Harry you’ll never guess what,” Ron interrupted.

“ What?”

“ I’m a healer! I mean a natural healer. I have the healing touch! ‘Mione’s been researching it over the last few days. I came into my powers when I healed you, but it knocked me out cold for two weeks. I couldn’t take the strain. But I’m getting training now, so I’ll be a lot more help in the future!”

Harry beamed at his friend, impressed. He was glad that Ron had finally shown a talent he could be proud of. Something that set him apart as special, a field in which he could outshine his friends.

“ That’s great, Ron. I’ll teach you elven healing magic when I’m better if you like. It might be useful for you.”

“ Thanks, Harry. I would appreciate that.”

“ *Hem hem.*”

The two boys looked at Dumbledore with apologetic looks, before the old man gave a small smile and continued what he had been saying.

“ As I was saying, you received some severe injuries to your chest, which were healed by Madame Pomfrey and Madame Potter. You have several shiny new scars, but they couldn’t be helped. You were given a blood transfusion as well, as you lost a lot from the vampire feeding, as well as from your injuries. In that respect, you should be fine. The curses that hit you caused some minor internal damage,

but that was also taken care of rather quickly. The one thing that is a little troubling is your physical changes...”

“ Physical changes?”

“ Yes. Sharper senses, paler skin, and a slight sensitivity to sunlight....”

“ You have *got* to be kidding!”

“ It’s not as bad as it may seem. Ron’s healing of you stopped the poison spreading too far, but it had started to take effect.”

Harry frantically thought back to the attack. He remembered coughing and spluttering, and blood on his lips. He had assumed it was from his internal injuries, but it must have been the vampire...

“ So it turned me...”

“ Well...sort of...” Hermione said.

“ Define ‘sort of’.”

“ As the headmaster said, my healing stopped it from going too far. Your senses are heightened, and you need to wear a lot of sun tan lotion if you go out in strong sunlight for too long, because you will burn easily. You also have longer canines...”

“ Anything else?” the dazed boy asked.

“ Not really. You changed a little, but you’re not a full vampire. You still have a reflection, and you don’t turn to dust if you go into sunlight. It’s better than nothing...”

“ True. I can’t believe this is happening. Everything happens to me. ‘Tea was right. I let it get to me. And now I really am a monster. I’m so sorry.”

That said, Harry curled up onto a protective ball, and cried.

## Chapter Ten – The Wolf and the Pelican

Harry's friends were starting to get worried. It had been three days since he had woken up and heard what he had become, and he hadn't spoken to anyone since. He refused to come out of the hospital wing, despite the fact that Madame Pomfrey had cleared him to go back to school. Hermione, Ron and Ginny had been to see him at least three times a day, and Sev, Minh and Eustace had made a few visits, but he just ignored them when they did come. Even the Marauders had been allowed to go to Corvus Corax for a while to see how their friend was doing, but the whole time they were there he simply stared at the ceiling.

Everyone was concerned for Harry's mental state. He had not taken the news of his change very well, and seemed to be shutting out the world in the hope that it would all go away. But there was nothing to be done. What was done was done, but Harry just wouldn't accept it. He had convinced himself he was a monster, and there was no changing his mind. As he lay there in bed, he sank further and further into depression.

\*~\*~\*

“Ginny! Wait!”

The youngest Weasley span around when she heard Remus' voice behind her. The pair had become good friends over the months she had been there, spending time together in the library and helping each other with homework. They were very close, although Remus had never told her his biggest secret. However, he thought now would be a good time to bring it up.

“Ginny, can I talk to you for a minute?”

Nodding, Ginny turned and continued her slow walk around the lake. She had come out for some fresh air in the hope that it would clear her head, but it didn't seem to help. Her head was filled with thoughts of how to help Harry, but none of them seemed plausible. Seeing Remus looking so anxious, she turned her full attention to him.

“ What is it, Remus.”

The werewolf sat down on the bank of the lake and gestured for Ginny to do the same. Once she was seated, he started to explain.

“ Ginny, I wanted to talk to you about a few things. Especially about me, and Harry.”

“ Go on.”

“ I was wondering how Harry was. When we saw him the other day, he seemed to be in shock or something. I must admit, I was surprised when I heard what happened, but he seems to be taking it really badly.”

“ Remus, what I’m going to tell you can’t go any further. Alright?” Ginny said, coming to a decision. She needed someone objective to confide in, and she couldn’t get that with Ron and Hermione.

“ Of course. You can tell me anything.”

“ The thing is...Harry’s taking this really badly because all he’s ever wanted in his life was to be loved, and to be normal. Since he started school, he’s been hounded by the press and students alike because where we’re from, he’s really famous. He always feels as if people think he’s special, and so he just wants to be normal. Now, I think he’s under the impression that he can never be normal again. Any chance he ever had of it has been taken away.”

“ What is he famous for?”

“ Remus, I’m going to tell you a story. You might not believe me, but it’s true. Just listen, and don’t interrupt me. And whatever you do, don’t tell anyone.”

“ I promise.”

And so, she told him. Told him about Harry being the Boy-Who-Lived, the Philosopher’s Stone, the Chamber of Secrets, and the Triwizard Tournament. She spoke of the amulet and their time with the founders, and fighting Grindelwald. She described their captivity in

greater detail, and spoke of all they had suffered. She left out details such as their real names, and anything Remus could use to connect his friends to Harry's parents. She left out too many details of the future that could easily be altered. The boy listened in awe as she told her story, and Harry's story. By the end, he didn't know what to say.

"Ginny...that's amazing."

"I know. I thought you would be the best one to talk to about this. James and Sirius would make a joke out of it. Peter...well, I don't think I could talk to Peter. And Sev's more Harry's friend than anybody else's. You're the sensible one, and I knew you would understand."

"Ginny, all I can say is that you need to get Harry out of this hole he has fallen into. From when I saw him, I recognised signs of depression setting in, as I've been there myself."

"But what can we do? He's suffered so much, and I think this may have pushed him over the edge..."

"It's not too late. I was like that when..."

"When what?" Ginny asked the fidgeting boy.

"When I...found out I...when I was bitten by a werewolf," Remus said, cringing back, waiting for her rejection. Ginny simply smiled and put her arm around his shoulders in a friendly hug.

"Remus, it's alright. I'm not scared. You're only a werewolf one night a month. And with Harry being half human now, I can't criticise."

"You don't hate me?" Remus asked in amazement.

"Of course not. You're my friend, and nothing will change that. I think you should talk to Harry, though."

"Me? Why me? What difference can I make."



“ Every difference. You said it yourself. You’ve been through the same thing, and you’ve learned to live with it. You know Harry’s history now, and you may just be able to get him to come around.”

Remus looked at Ginny and saw the hope in her eyes. With a sigh, he nodded his head. Ginny beamed at him, and threw her arms around his neck and gave him a kiss on the cheek. Remus, blushing, changed the subject.

“ So, did you meet me in the future?”

“ Oh, yes. You were the best Defence Against the Dark Arts professor we ever had.”

“ Me?! A teacher?!”

“ Yup, and you were marvelous. It was a shame you left after only one year.”

“ A teacher. Unbelievable.”

The pair fell into a fit of giggling as Ginny told him stories of the future and the past, and all of the adventures she had shared.

\*~\*~\*

The next day Remus, as promised, went to see Harry. He found the boy in the same state as the last time he saw him, and tentatively took a seat on the edge of his bed. Looking at his friend more closely, he noticed a deadness to his dull green eyes that had never been there before, and it frightened him.

“ Hello, Harry.”

No response.

“ I have something I need to talk to you about. Do you think you could pay attention?”

Nothing.

“ I need to talk to you about what you have become. Will you please look at me?”

A slow blinking of Harry's eyes.

“ Ok, you need to snap out of it mate. I can't talk to you like this.”

Utter stillness.

“ You're not even listening are you?”

Not even the slightest movement.

“ Ginny's pregnant with Lucius' child.”

That got a response. Harry sat up so quickly that Remus nearly fell onto the floor. He could see his friend's eyes whipping around the room as he became more and more agitated. Finally, he spoke.

“ That's not true. Remus, tell me that's not true.”

The werewolf smiled at his friend, relieved that he was finally talking.

“ Of course it's not true, Harry.”

“ Then why did you say it?”

“ Because it was the first thing that came to mind that would snap you out of that fog of depression you'd buried yourself in.”

“ If I want to wallow, I'll wallow. Go away. Please.”

“ Harry, please just listen to me first. Give me ten minutes of your attention, and if you still want me to leave, I will do.”

The green eyed boy looked at the werewolf cautiously for a few seconds, before hesitantly nodding his head.

“ What do you want to talk about?”

Remus sighed in relief. If he could only get Harry talking, he believed he could talk some sense into him.

“ Please, tell me why you’re so upset. So you’re part vampire. So what? I’m a werewolf, and I live a perfectly normal life. You can beat this, Harry. It’s not the end of the world; you just have to learn to adjust.”

“ But they were right, Remus. I’m a monster. I was bad enough before, but now it’s official. I don’t deserve to live...”

“ That’s nonsense. If you weren’t here, who would stop the Dark Lord when you get back to your own time?”

Harry’s head whipped around and he stared at the younger boy in shock.

“ How did you...”

“ Ginny told me. Last night. She wanted me to talk some sense into you, and figured I’d get on better if I knew some of what you’ve been through. And she was right. Harry, you have people to save, and if you give up now, their deaths will be on your head. Do you really want that?”

“ N-no.”

“ Well then. Your life has to go on. You’re sinking into depression, and if you’re not careful it will only get worse. People need you, Harry. They need an icon to look up to and give them hope. They need a warrior brave enough to stand up for what is right. If they see their saviour moping around, it’s not exactly going to fill them with confidence. You have to look on the bright side. Ginny says that since you came to our time, you’ve been different. More confident, and even cocky in some ways. But I don’t see it like that. That’s what you needed to be to survive. You’ve been through a lot, and you have more to face. If you are to defeat the Dark, you need all the confidence you can get. Without confidence in yourself and your abilities you wouldn’t be able to lead the Light into battle. You wouldn’t be able to fight and beat the Dark Lord. See your being turned into a part vampire as a blessing rather than a curse.”

“ How do you figure?”

“ Tell me what you need to beat You-Know-Who.”

“ Power. And strong spells.”

“ And what do you need to survive until you meet him again, one on one?”

“ Strength and superiority over the enemy.”

“ Exactly. From what happened at the battle, you have gained strength, speed, endurance and sharper senses. You couple that with the skills you already had and your magical strength, and you have a weapon of mass destruction. You have been given what is perhaps that little extra advantage you need to be ultimately victorious. You need to stop wallowing in self pity. You are not a monster. You are a warrior, and you do what has to be done.”

“ But...”

“ No ‘buts’, Harry. I’ve thought this through, and I know what I’m talking about. The world needs you, so snap out of it.”

Harry sat and stared at Remus in stunned silence for what seemed like an age. What the young werewolf had said contradicted everything Harry had been mulling over in his mind for the last few days. When he thought about it, though, the younger boy was right. Harry had become stronger, despite the slight disadvantages, and it might be what he needed to finally defeat Voldemort. As he was thinking this over, Remus quietly slipped out of the room, a small smile on his face.

\*~\*~\*

“ Did it work?” Ginny asked as Remus flooed into the room. The Marauders, Lily and Sev had been allowed into Harry’s room when they wanted to visit their friends in hospital. After Dumbledore told them where the four had disappeared to after Hallow’een, they wanted to visit them. After a brief Order meeting, it was agreed that the six of them would be allowed to visit Corvus Corax via Harry’s room, as long as someone was aware they were going. This worked well, especially after Ron, Ginny and Hermione went back to

school. When Remus left to speak to Harry, Ginny had waited in Harry's room for him to come back, eager for news.

" I think it worked. He heard me out, at least."

" Well, that's got to be progress. Did he speak?"

" Surprisingly, yes. It took me a while to snap him out of his stupor, though, and get him to listen."

" How did you do it?"

" I told him you were pregnant with Lucius Malfoy's child."

" You WHAT!?"

" It was the first thing I could think of that would grab his attention. It worked like a charm."

" Well, I hope you told him it wasn't true!"

" Of course I did! I just needed something to shock him enough that he responded."

" So what happened after that?"

" I told him to stop being pathetic, and that the world needed him. Stuff like that. I had a whole speech planned. I think he listened, although we won't know until we next see him."

" That's true. Did you tell him about your lycanthropy?"

" I mentioned it, but he didn't say much about it. Not that he said much about anything..."

" While we're on the topic, when's the next full moon?"

" Two days time. Why?"

" Do you want me to come with you?"

" I'd kill you!"

“ No you wouldn’t. I can go in my animagus form. You won’t hurt me like that.”

“ You’re an animagus?”

In response, Ginny turned into a beautiful pelican, and flew around the room a couple of times before landing next to the gaping fifth year.

“ Wow, that was amazing. James, Sirius and Peter have been trying to become animagi for years, but they didn’t get very far. You know the whole meditating thing you have to do to find out your form? They never got the hang of that. They’re about ready to give up...”

“ Don’t worry. Over the Christmas holidays, I’ll organise a meeting for us all. I’m sure between me, Ron, Hermione and possibly Harry we can get them on the right track. After all, it was the four of us who taught Minerva McGonagall the transformation.”

“ You taught our Transfiguration professor how to become an animagus? Wow!”

“ Yeah, it was fun, too. I think we can come to some arrangement. So, do you want me to accompany you on the full moon?”

“ I’d like that.”

The pair stayed in Harry’s room long into the night, discussing Ginny’s past, Remus’ way of coping with his ‘condition’, and a variety of inane subject discussed only between close friends.

\*~\*~\*

Breakfast was disrupted the following morning when the doors to the Great Hall burst open with a resounding bang. Much to everyone’s surprise, the unmistakable form of Harry Potter could be seen standing in the doorway, arms crossed and a smirk on his face.

“ Hello everyone. Miss me?”

The Marauders, the time travellers and Sev all leapt to their feet and made their way over to their friend, taking it in turn to welcome him back. After a few minutes, 'Tea came floating over, a gentle smile on her face.

“ It's nice to see you again, Harry. Are you feeling better?”

“ Much better, thanks. Better than I've felt in a long time.”

“ That's good to hear.”

After a few words with each of his friends, Harry made his way to the Slytherin table with Sev at his side. On the way, he looked up at the staff table and was surprised to see relieved looks on the faces of most of the professors. Dumbledore especially looked pleased, and Harry could see his eyes twinkling madly. Once the pair was seated, Harry turned to Sev and asked him something he had been meaning to mention before the battle.

“ Sev, do you feel ready to try the animagus viewing spell?”

“ I do. When can I try it?”

“ Tonight. If you find out your form now, you might be ready to try the transformation after the Christmas holidays.”

“ I hope so. I can't wait. I'm glad you're back, Harry.”

“ I'm glad, too. I'm sorry I worried you, Sev.”

“ It's alright.”

“ Well, well, well, if it isn't Harry Anguifer back from the dead.”

Harry span around in his seat and came face to face with a smirking Lucius. His eyes roved over Harry and a malicious glint appeared in his eyes.

“ You look a little pale. Maybe that'll teach you for defying the Dark Lord.”

“ Don’t mess with me, Lucius. You know it never ends well. For you, at least,” Harry sneered back.

“ I doubt you could do anything, Anguifer. After nearly six weeks in hospital, I can’t see you being able to take me.”

“ I wouldn’t bet on that,” Harry said, a low growl emitting from his throat.

“ Surely you’ve seen what opposing the Dark Lord does to you. Maybe you’ll be more open to the idea of joining him now.”

“ You should know *never* to ask that. If you mention it again, you won’t live to tell the tale.”

“ Idle threats, Anguifer. You can’t hurt me anymore.”

In response, Harry leapt from the table and grabbed the other Slytherin by the throat, his eyes glowing a little and his fangs exposed. Lucius paled considerably and started to squirm in the iron tight grasp.

“ Leave, *now*, before I crush your windpipe. I have had a *very* bad week, and I am *not* in the mood for dealing with you.”

Dropping him to the ground, Harry sat back down as Lucius scrambled backwards across the floor and retreated out of the Great Hall. The rest of the students and staff stared at the sixth year in fear and amazement, but one glare sent them straight back to their breakfasts. Harry turned to the petrified looking Sev and gave him a smile.

“ Now, where were we?”

\*~\*~\*

That night, Harry heard a timid knock on his door. Opening it, he found a nervous looking Sev standing in the doorway. Harry gave a sigh and waved his apprentice in.



“ Sev, you don’t have to be scared. I thought we covered this. I’m not going to hurt you. Now, sit on the floor, and start your meditation. When you feel you’re ready, say the incantation I taught you, and an image of your potential form will appear.”

The younger boy did as asked, sitting cross legged on the floor and meditating quietly. After a few minutes, Harry heard Sev start to mutter.

“ Video Animagus.”

Sev opened his eyes when he heard Harry gasp in surprise. He stared at the creature in shock for a moment before asking the obvious.

“ What *is* that?”

But Harry wasn’t listening. He was too busy gaping at the large reptile stalking the floor in front of him. Sev, listening carefully, made out a few words of what the older boy was muttering.

“ Can’t be...extinct...didn’t know...possible...weird...fits him, though...amazing.”

“ Harry, what is it?” Sev repeated. Harry came out of his trance and looked in surprise at his friend.

“ That, Sev, is a velociraptor.”

## Chapter Eleven – Christmas and Animagi

“ Ginny are you sure about this?”

“ Of course. I know for a fact that it’ll be perfectly safe.”

Remus wasn’t convinced. The pair was sitting in the downstairs room of the Shrieking Shack, waiting for the moon to rise. Ginny had followed her friend down by turning invisible, so that the teacher accompanying them didn’t notice her. Now that they were left alone, and Remus’ change was fast approaching, they were starting to get a bit nervous. Remus had never had anyone with him while he was a wolf, and the thought of his friend seeing him as a monster made his heart ache. However, his fears were laid to rest when he looked into her eyes and saw only companionship and acceptance. Before he had chance to dwell too much on it, pain suddenly wracked his body and he felt the change begin.

“ Gin, you’d better change. The moon is out,” he ground out.

“ Alright, I will.”

With a faint \*pop\*, Ginny turned into a large pelican, and sat back to wait for her friend’s change. Seeing him writhing in agony as his bones snapped and reformed tore her up inside. Remus was such a sweet and gentle person, and she felt like no-one deserved this less than him. After a few drawn out minutes, a fully formed werewolf stood before her, growling softly. Inching forward, she tried to make herself look small and unthreatening, so as not to anger the wild beast before her. After a few minutes of sitting perfectly still, Ginny slowly raised her head and looked closely at Remus. Upon seeing that she wasn’t going to attack, the wolf had sat down and was staring at the other animal, its head cocked to one side. Ginny stood up, nodded to the wolf and headed out of the shack and into the Forbidden Forest. Looking back, she saw the grey beast following not far behind, and with an internal smile, she waited for him to catch up.

\*~\*~\*

The following day at breakfast, each of the time travellers, bar Ginny, received a message by owl to meet after breakfast in Harry's room. The sixth years all had free periods that morning, so it was the perfect time for them to get together without anybody being suspicious.

When the owl had arrived at the Slytherin table, Sev had given Harry a funny look, but Harry had merely shook his head at him and gone back to his breakfast. His head was swirling with thoughts about what the meeting could be about. The note had been in Ginny's handwriting, so he knew she had something to do with it, but he didn't know what had suddenly brought it on. He puzzled over it until the end of breakfast before saying goodbye to Sev and heading to his room. When he got there, the other three were waiting for him. As soon as he sat down, Ginny stood and made her way to the wall.

"I'll be back in a few minutes, guys, there's something I need to go and do."

That said, she created a door and left her confused friends to look at each other in bewilderment.

"What was that all about? I think my sister's finally lost it. Do you know why she called this meeting?"

"Haven't a clue, Ron, but I doubt she would have arranged it if it wasn't important," Hermione said.

"True. She's been acting a bit odd lately though. Very secretive. I wonder if she's going to tell us what she's been up to," Ron added.

"That's likely, but we'll have to wait until she comes back to find out."

The three lapsed into silence and the minutes ticked by. Eventually, a door appeared in the wall and Ginny came through, leading the four Marauders to the seats around the fireplace. When they were all comfortable, Hermione broke the silence.

"Shouldn't you four be in lessons?"

“Yup, we should be in Divination. All it took was Sirius telling Trelawney that he saw the grim and that the four of us would die a horrible and painful death. She sent us straight out, saying that we needed time to set our affairs in order,” James explained.

“I called you all here,” Ginny started, “because I have a proposition for you all. Last night I went with Remus to the Shrieking Shack and accompanied him when he became a werewolf. The outing was a great success, as I managed to keep his wolf form under control. We actually had a lot of fun. Now, from what Remus has told me, you Marauders have been trying for years to become animagi so you could go with him, but have thus far been unsuccessful. What I am proposing is that we four teach the transformation to you. What do you think?”

It took a few moments for everything she had said to sink in. The Marauders were surprised at the offer, and were curious about what forms the time travellers took. They hadn't known they were animagi. They had tried to complete the transformation themselves, but had hit a bit of a snag. They covered the theory pretty quickly, but the concentration it took to perform the viewing spell had eluded them. They needed the help really badly, and they knew it.

The other three time travellers were thinking over the offer. What Ginny said made sense, as they knew they could be of help. They also knew from what Sirius had said in the future that the three of them became animagi in their fifth year. If they didn't help, they may never get it right, therefore time would be disrupted. They couldn't risk that happening. Anyway, according to time, they had already helped the Marauders, so not helping them was not really an option.

“I'll help.”

“Me too.”

“And me.”

“Good, I was hoping you'd see it that way. Now, all we need is a way to meet up to practice. I suggest we do it during the Christmas holidays, as we will have plenty of time to work on it,” Ginny said.

“ I have a suggestion,” Peter spoke up.

“ What’s that?” Harry asked in a strained voice. He tried to avoid the boy who would someday betray his parents as much as possible, but sometimes it wasn’t an option.

“ Well, the four of us, plus Ron, are the only Gryffindors staying at Hogwarts this year. Most people are going home because of the threat of You-Know-Who. They want to spend time with their families. We all opted to stay because we like to spend Christmas together, and James’ parents always come here anyway. Why don’t you all move into Gryffindor Tower for the holidays.”

“ Is that allowed?” Hermione asked.

“ I don’t see why not,” Sirius said, picking up Peter’s thread, “ I mean, that way we could all spend Christmas together and have a party in the common room. I doubt anyone would mind, and it would only be for two weeks.”

“ Well, I’m up for it,” Harry said.

“ Me too,” Ginny piped up.

“ I suppose,” Hermione reluctantly agreed.

“ So it’s settled then? We can start on the first day of the holidays. If you bring whatever you’ll need for your stay after the other students leave, you can move right in and no-one need be any the wiser,” Ron said. Everyone nodded and smiled at each other. It had been settled. The time travellers were teaching the Marauders how to be animagi.

\*~\*~\*

The morning of the first day of the Christmas holidays finally came, and Harry was sad to have to see Sev off. The younger boy had received a summons from his father, so he had to go home for the holidays. Harry thought his friend had seemed distracted since the letter came, as if he was dreading something. When he asked about it, though, he received only a scared look and a muttered brush

off. Harry had decided that if Sev was still acting strange when he came back, he would confront him about it.

Over breakfast, Harry started thinking of ways he could find out what was wrong with his fellow Slytherin. The only thing that sprang to mind could be classed as deception, and he wasn't sure about breaking his friend's trust. However, after much deliberation, he decided to throw caution and his conscience to the wind and go ahead with his plan. Slipping out of the Great Hall, he made his way down to the Slytherin dorms to pack what he would need for his stay in Gryffindor Tower. When he got there, instead of heading straight for his room, he made a quick stop at Sev's dorm. Lifting the lid of the waiting trunk, he unravelled Nirah from his wrist and started to speak to her.

\*Nirah, I need a favour\*

\*Anything Harry. What do you want?\*

\*I want you to go home with Sev and keep an eye on him. Report back anything strange that happens while you're there. Can you do that for me?\*

\*Of course\* Nirah replied.

After placing charms on her so she could be separated from her mate for an extended period of time, Harry gently lowered the snake into the trunk and closed the lid, thankful that she was still under the influence of the spell that made her visible only to those who knew she was there. With a wave of his hand, several small air holes appeared in the side of the trunk, which Harry quickly camouflaged with concealing charms. When he was done, he slipped back out of the room and made his way to his own room to pack.

Two hours later, after waving Sev off at the main doors, Harry headed up to Gryffindor Tower, Hermione and Ginny catching up to him on the way. They had all shrunk their trunks earlier that morning, so they were all ready for their move. They knew it would be strange being back in Gryffindor again, even just for a short time, but they were definitely looking forward to it.

When they got to the portrait of the Fat Lady, they were pleased to see Ron waiting for them. As soon as he spotted their approach, he turned to the portrait and gave the password, holding the door open as they all piled in. Once the new arrivals were all settled in their appropriate dorm rooms, they met up with the Marauders in the common room to start the training. When they were all seated in a circle on the floor, Hermione started to prepare the three who would be doing the spell. Although it wasn't necessary to go through with it, as the time travellers could simply tell the three what their forms were so they could go straight to the research, they knew that they couldn't say anything. It would look suspicious. As Hermione talked James, Sirius and Peter through the procedure, they started to relax and meditate in the way that they were supposed to. After a few minutes of silence, Hermione started to move around the circle.

“ Right, James I want you to say the incantation.”

“ Video Animagus.”

A brilliant glowing stag appeared in the middle of the circle of students and pranced around for a few minutes before disappearing. James seemed pleased with his form, and sat back to see what the other two had. Peter went next, although it took him a few tries before anything happened. When the small rat appeared on the floor, James, Remus and Sirius burst out laughing, causing the other Marauder to turn bright red. They had to wait for Sirius to calm down before he could try the spell himself, as his concentration had been ruined.

“ Video Animagus,” he stated clearly.

A large black dog appeared in the middle of the floor, and Sirius beamed at it.

“ Well, at least now we can all truthfully tell Trelawney that we've seen the grim.”

\*~\*~\*

After a week of thorough research by the Marauders, and homework by the others, Christmas day finally came. Remus was the first to get

up, and he managed to sneak into all of the dorm rooms to play a prank on the occupants. Sitting by the fire, a mug of hot chocolate in his hand, he waited patiently for the others to get up. After about half an hour, he was roused from his doze by a loud scream coming from the boy's corridor. A few minutes later, Sirius and James came storming into the common room.

"What is the meaning of this?"

"The meaning of what, James?" Remus asked, a look of innocence on his face.

"This!" Sirius said, pointing to his red and green hair. Remus smiled back at him.

"I just thought you ought to be in the Christmas mood."

"We don't need green and red hair to be in the Christmas mood," Harry said as he appeared in the door, similarly afflicted.

After a few minutes, the others came grumbling into the room, their hair all done in Christmas colours. Not long after, the portrait hole opened, admitting Minh and Eustace, who started laughing when they saw what Remus had done. Everyone scowled at them, except for Harry, who discreetly waved his hand, changing the two adults' hair red, green and gold. This brought a smile to everyone's face as they all congregated around the tree to open their presents. Looking around at all the happy faces, Harry felt a lump in his throat. Seeing James, Minh and Eustace together made him feel very emotional. This was his family. The family he had never had. And he was going to make the most of it.



## Chapter Twelve – Sev's Problem

The Christmas holidays seemed to pass in a blur of pranks, presents and research. Harry even found some spare time to catch up with the book he was writing. He had managed to get behind with it after the battle, and he used any chance he got to work on it. Hermione and Ginny were the same, leaving Ron to make plans with the Marauders for various pranks they were planning to play on the teachers. However, all too soon, the Hogwarts Express was pulling into Hogsmeade station, and the three non-Gryffindors had to move back to their own Houses.

His first night back in the Slytherin dungeons, Harry couldn't sleep. By two o'clock he'd had enough, and got up. *Maybe I could read for a while in the common room*, he thought, *if I can't sleep I may as well be learning something*. However, once he reached the common room, he stopped short, for a small hunched figure was already sitting by the fire.

"Sev? What are you doing still up?"

The dark haired boy jumped, and whirled around, taking in Harry on the stairs.

"I could say the same to you."

"I couldn't sleep, what's your excuse?"

"Same."

Harry noticed his friend absent mindedly rubbing the inside of his forearm. *I know what this is about*, Harry thought.

"Sev, I can see something's bothering you. You know you can tell me anything, I won't let it go any further."

Severus looked up at his friend sitting opposite him. He knew he could tell Harry anything, or almost anything...

"I can't. This isn't something a Light Wizard would understand."

“ Whoever said I was a Light Wizard?”

The younger boy looked at his friend in shock. He wasn't quite sure what to say to that. He knew what his friend was implying, but didn't think it could be true.

“ But...but...you can't be a Dark Wizard!”

“ Why not?”

“ You fight You-Know-Who every chance you get. You hate all Death Eaters and everything they stand for. And you're not evil!”

Harry heaved a great sigh. *So this is what this is all about*, he thought, *I'll have to do some explaining I think, but how to go about it?*

“ Sev, what defines a Dark Wizard?”

“ What do you mean,” he asked, puzzled by the seemingly random question.

“ I just want you to give me a definition. Tell me the characteristics of a Dark Wizard.”

“ Um...well, they're evil, they use Dark Magic to harm and kill others, and they follow You-Know-Who.”

“ There now, you see? You're completely wrong.”

Severus looked at Harry in astonishment.

“ But...that's what my father told me...”

“ And I'm telling you different. Satanus Snape doesn't know as much as he likes to think he does. By definition, a Light Wizard is someone who uses predominantly Light Magic, resorting to Dark Magic only, for instance, in the heat of a battle to the death. Professor Dumbledore is a good example of this. A Dark Wizard is someone who uses both Light and Dark Magic in their everyday lives. What you have to remember, is that Dark and Light are simply terms for the

same thing. It is all magic, and can all be used to harm in some way. A simple levitation charm can be fatal if someone is floated out of the Astronomy Tower and dropped. Dark Magic is not evil, it is the intent to harm that is evil. I, by definition, am a Dark Wizard. I know more Dark Magic than even Voldemort, but that doesn't make me evil."

" Well, I've never heard it put that way before," the bewildered teen replied.

" Sev, I was once told by Voldemort himself that there is no good and evil, only power, and those too weak to seek it. This is completely false. There is good and evil, and the key to it all is intent. There are some things I would like to change about the wizarding world, but that doesn't mean torturing Muggles is the answer. Voldemort is evil because he chooses to harm; I am not, because I choose to help. Do you understand?"

Severus could just nod. Then something Harry had said came back to him.

" When did you meet You-Know-Who? I mean, I know you've been in battles with him, but that doesn't exactly leave you much time for chatting."

Harry sighed, frantically trying to think of something to say. He couldn't tell him too much, as it might change the future.

" He tried to recruit me once. That was the line he used to try and win me over. It didn't work and I turned him down."

" And he let you go?!"

" No, I escaped. He wasn't very happy about it, I can tell you."

" I'm not surprised!"

" Now, I want you to tell me what's bothering you."

" I can't, I'm evil, and you're good, so I just can't."

By this time Sev's mask of indifference had completely dropped. Harry was surprised to see so much emotion from the young man.

"Sev, you are not evil, no matter what you say. I won't do anything to you. You're my friend, and I don't betray my friends. Now, tell me."

The young potions master looked at Harry. Seeing the sincerity in his eyes, he lifted up his sleeve, showing a recently burned in Dark Mark. Looking up, he was surprised to see that instead of being horrified and disgusted, Harry looked accepting.

"I thought it might be something like this. Was it your choice?"

"No. My father made me. I don't want to hurt people, despite what people think. But my father's been a Death Eater from the start, and he wasn't going to let me not be."

At this point silent tears had started to make their way down his face. Harry had never seen Severus Snape look so vulnerable.

"Sev, I can help you if you like. Do you honestly want to help save people?"

"Of course, I'd do anything. If what you say is true, then I'm not evil! I want to stop You-Know-Who!"

"Well, for starters, stop calling him You-Know-Who. His name is Voldemort. Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself. If you really don't want to say Voldemort, call him something else. At least give him a name! Call him Shirley for all I care."

"You want me to call the Dark Lord Shirley?!" Sev asked in awe.

"Sure, why not. Not to his face, obviously, but in private. It might make you less scared of him. Now, I have a proposition for you. You do realise that if you try to leave the Death Eaters, Shirley will kill you?"

Sev couldn't help but let out a snort of laughter at how that sounded.

“ Yes, I understand that.”

“ Would you be willing to be a spy for Professor Dumbledore?”

“ I never thought of that. It would be a good solution. I could help people, and not be killed by You-...Shirley.”

“ Will you do it?”

“ Yes.”

“ Good, then I have something for you.”

“ You do?”

“ Call it a late Christmas present.”

Harry ran back to his dorm room and rummaged through his trunk. Eventually, he found what he was looking for stashed right in the corner. Taking it out, he made his way back to the common room. Walking up to his friend, he took his gift and attached it around his neck. Severus, surprised, looked down at the faintly glowing crystal.

“ Harry, you have one of these. Why are you giving me a necklace?”

“ Sev, do you trust me?”

“ Of course.”

“ CRUCIO!”

Sev started when Harry threw the Cruciatus curse at him. Knowing from his initiation that the curse brought great pain, he flinched and waited for it to hit. He was astonished when all he could feel was a slight tickle. Looking up, he was surprised to see Harry smiling as he lifted the curse.

“ Did you just cast the Cruciatus curse on me?”

“ Yep!”

“ But it didn't hurt!”

“ That's the point. The necklace I gave you is an immunity necklace. It protects you from all three Unforgivables. It's the same as mine, and can only be taken off by the person who put it on. This is why I put it on you. If Shirley notices it and wants you to take it off, you won't be able to. I thought it would be a good thing for you to have, considering how often Shirley tortures his followers. Just remember, when he throws the curse at you, act like you're in pain, otherwise he'll get suspicious.”

“ Thank you, Harry. I didn't know anything like this existed...”

“ There are only five left in the world, and we have two of them. You can't tell anyone, not even Dumbledore. Speaking of which, I want you to come to his office now, so we can sort this out.”

Severus just nodded, and the pair left the common room, heading to the headmaster's office.

\*~\*~\*

When they reached the stone gargoyle guarding Dumbledore's office, Harry stood there trying to guess the password. After a few minutes of listing various sweets and biscuits, he looked over to his friend, only to find him looking back at him, bewildered.

“ Harry, why are you listing the entire stock of Honeydukes?”

“ Dumbledore's passwords are always sweets. I just have to work through until I get the right one. You could help, you know. Might make it a bit quicker.”

A few minutes later, after a combined effort, the gargoyle leapt to one side and the two students made their way up to the headmaster's office. Knocking on the door they waited to be asked in, before sitting in front of the enormous desk. Dumbledore looked back at them, eyes twinkling madly.

“ Harry, Severus, to what do I owe this pleasure? Lemon Drop?”

“ No thank you, sir. We just came here because Sev has something he would like to discuss with you.”

“ Of course! What is it you would like to tell me?”

Sev looked over at Harry for reassurance. When his friend gave him an encouraging nod, he turned back to the headmaster and took a deep breath.

“ Professor Dumbledore, Harry has convinced me to talk to you about a serious matter that occurred over the Christmas holidays.”

He faltered slightly, unsure how to continue. Dumbledore picked up the conversation.

“ It’s alright, Severus. I’m here to listen, not to judge.”

At this, Harry couldn’t help but let out a snort of amusement. Dumbledore gave him an inquisitive look.

“ Something the matter, Harry?”

“ Sorry, sir. Just thinking back to our conversation after...after Percy died. If that wasn’t judgmental, I don’t know what is.”

“ Harry, you know I’m sorry about that. Now, I believe young Severus came here to tell me something, and you’re not letting him get a word in edgeways.

“ Sorry. Go ahead Sev, I’ll explain what that was about later.”

“ Well, I think it might be easier if I show you, Headmaster.”

“ If that’s what you feel is best, by all means go ahead.”

In response, Sev did exactly what he had done with Harry. He pulled up his sleeve and exposed the Dark Mark burned into the soft flesh of his left forearm. Dumbledore let out a small gasp, before turning sad eyes to the fifth year sitting before him.

“ Would you care to explain, Mr. Snape?”

At this point, Sev just let go of all the feelings that had been building up over the Christmas holidays. As he sobbed out his story, Harry put a comforting arm around his shoulders and pulled him into a brotherly hug. When Sev had finished, Harry thought it best to outline his plans.

“ Professor, I want him to join the Order.”

“ Are you sure that is wise, Harry?”

“ Yes, I am. Sev never wanted this, but what’s done is done. We cannot change the past, although by Merlin I wish that wasn’t true. I know what it’s like to want to make past pain go away, but from what I’ve learned recently, you can either wallow in self pity, or make the best of a bad situation. Sev was forced into taking the Dark Mark by his father. He never asked to join the Death Eaters. He doesn’t want to serve the Evil Bastard, but there is nothing he can do to change it. However, I have given him a better offer. The lesser of two evils, if you will. I have asked him to be your spy in Voldemort’s ranks. He can gather useful information about the Dark Lord’s plans and give it to the Order. If he is forced to perform atrocities in the name of Voldemort, then let him make up for it by saving lives. You know as well as I do how much the Order could do to help people if only we knew when the attacks would be happening. It could work, and I’m sure it would be the best thing for Sev. I’m asking you, Headmaster. No, I’m begging you. Let him join. Please.”

Dumbledore considered Harry’s words before nodding slowly.

“ If you trust him, Harry, then I will do the same. It’s your call, but you can perform the formalities.”

Harry nodded in gratitude, before turning to a now calmer but rather bewildered Severus.

“ Sev, what I would like to ask you is if you would be willing to join the Order of the Phoenix. It’s a secret organisation led by Professor Dumbledore that opposes Voldemort. We would ask you to be our spy in his ranks, a role that would allow you to redeem yourself for all the acts you will be forced to perform in his name. Do you accept?”



“ I do,” Sev said without hesitation.

“ Good.”

~Fawkes, could you perform the honours?~ Harry asked the phoenix in the corner. Fawkes let out a trill of phoenix song before flying to land heavily on Sev’s shoulder. After a moment, he began to sing strongly while Harry performed the secrecy spells used on all Order members. He then linked the Dark Mark on Sev’s arm to the Order marks.

“ Sev, what I’ve done is placed secrecy spells on you, so that you can’t tell our secrets, even under the influence of veritaserum. The Order also has its own calling device, which is actually a modified version of the Dark Mark. We each have a tattoo or birthmark, or some such thing, which is connected to the Order leader. This is how you are called to meetings. Unlike Shirley’s mark, it doesn’t hurt, it merely tingles, and they are all different so Order members can not be easily identified. I’ve used your Dark Mark as the basis for this, to prevent you having any suspicious new markings. Just remember, if it hurts, Shirley’s calling, and if it tingles, Professor Dumbledore’s calling. Alright?”

“ Yeah.”

“ Good.”

“ May I ask who Shirley is?” Dumbledore said, his eyes twinkling madly. Harry blushed.

“ That’s what I have Sev calling old Voldie. I told him that fear of a name increased fear of the thing itself. I thought if he wouldn’t say ‘Voldemort’, the least he could do was call him by a different name, if only to name him. So we came up with Shirley. I figured it would make it easier for him to handle the Death Eater meetings.”

“ That makes sense, Harry. I like it.”

Harry smiled and turned back to his friend.

“ Well, Sev. Welcome to the Order of the Phoenix.”

### Chapter Thirteen – Sev's First Order Meeting

“ Try harder, Sev. Harder!”

“ I don't know if I can.”

“ I know you can. Now, go lower. Really try.”

“ I am trying.”

“ Not hard enough. Again.”

“ Do I have to?”

“ Yes! You can do it! Get them lower. Really feel it.”

“ I don't feel it, Harry.”

“ You will, you just need to practice.”

“ I have been. Every day in front of the mirror. I'll never be as good as you.”

“ I've been on the receiving end for years, I have a lot of experience. Ok, just once more. You've nearly got it.”

Sev let out a deep breath before contorting his features into his most intimidating scowl. Harry had spent the last two weeks trying to turn his young friend into the perfect spy, starting with facial expressions. Although Sev had mastered sneering years ago, Harry was finding it difficult to teach the boy to scowl properly. He knew from the future that Sev had a whole catalogue of scowls used for a variety of occasions, but so far he had only mastered 'mildly annoyed', 'I'd move now if I were you' and 'you really don't want to mess with me'. He was having trouble with a few of the worst ones, such as 'if I was allowed to maim you, I would' and 'you are going to suffer a prolonged and painful death any second now'. Sev had been working on the latter for four days, but he just couldn't get the hang of it.

Since Sev had been initiated into the Order, he had yet to attend a meeting. His first was to be in a few days time, and he wanted to

perfect his act by then. Harry had explained that a good spy could hide their emotions and lie flawlessly. While Sev's time in Slytherin had taught him a lot in these areas, it was not enough when dealing with Voldemort. The Dark Lord would be able to see through most deceptions, so Harry had to prepare him for all eventualities. This is where the training on facial expressions came in. Sev had to learn to fake joy in the face of Muggle torture, but also disgust for anyone who Voldemort did not like. Harry knew that these lessons could save him from giving himself away, and thus save his life, but at the same time he was also reluctant to go through with them. The Sev he had grown to know in this time was so different to the greasy Potions Master who had taught him for four years. He was more human, showing his emotions when he thought it appropriate, and more open and trusting. He had a good sense of humour, and was hardly ever sarcastic. It broke Harry's heart to have to turn such a sweet boy into the evil git he would be seen as in Harry's time. What really got to Harry was the fact that he had hated the man when he was younger, but that he was the one that made him that way.

"Sev, how about we move on to something else?"

"Like what?"

"Well, we've covered sneers, scowls and smirks. How about we work on your mask of indifference?"

"If we have to. Are you sure this is necessary?"

"Yes. I know Shirley well, and he can see through most deceptions. You need to be able to pull this off to survive. I'm working on your weapons training, animagus and spell work; just call this another aspect of turning you into the perfect warrior."

"What if I don't want to be a warrior? What if I just want to be a normal boy, grow up to have a respectable job and a family, and die happy? What if that's what I want?"

"I never said it was what you wanted. But it *is* what you need. Life has placed you in this position, and you have to make the best of it. You may not like it, in fact you will probably hate it, but you have to accept it. I mean, I would give everything to be normal, but that has

never been an option for me either. Just think, though, that life can only get better. I want you to live to see that time.”

“ I know. I’m sorry, Harry. I just get frustrated, you know?”

“ I know. I really do.”

\*~\*~\*

January 27th was the first Order meeting after Sev’s initiation. None of the members had been informed except Dumbledore, not even Harry’s friends. They were going to be surprised when he turned up at the meeting that evening. Harry had been working on Sev’s spying skills since the start of term, and the younger boy was starting to get the hang of deception and manipulation. While Harry was proud of his progress, he still hated what he had to do to his friend.

When eight o’clock came, Dumbledore sent the customary tingle through the Order tattoos to indicate a meeting was being called. Sev was in Harry’s room as usual, practicing his skills with a sword. He had made terrific progress since the start of school, and Harry was confident he would be very good by the time he had to go to a new time. Harry knew when the meeting was to be called, and when Sev stopped half way through his practice and clutched his arm, he simply smiled at his friend.

“ That’s what it feels like when an Order meeting is called. As you will notice, it feels quite different to Shirley’s callings.”

“ It tickles!”

“ Yes, but at least it doesn’t hurt.”

“ True. What do we have to do now?”

“ Well, now we have to go to Domus Corvus Corax, the place you went to when I was in hospital. There are three ways of getting there; by floo powder, by apparition or by portkey. I don’t have a portkey, and it’s a long way to the other side of the anti-apparition wards, so we’ll be taking floo powder.”

“ I thought you couldn’t floo in and out of Hogwarts,” Sev said, one eyebrow raised.

“ How do you know that?”

“ I read it in ‘Hogwarts: a History’.”

“ Oh no, you’re starting to sound like Hermione.”

“ Why?”

“ She’s always quoting that book.”

“ Oh, right. So, how will we be flooing there?”

“ Do you remember that room we were in when we were planning those pranks on the Marauders?”

“ Yeah, the one you said was hidden?”

“ That’s the one. The fireplace in that room is the only place you can get in and out of Hogwarts by fire.”

“ Isn’t that a little insecure?”

“ Nope. I’ve set the wards so that you can floo out to anywhere, but you can only floo in from Domus Corvus Corax. As Corvus Corax is even more secure than Hogwarts, it’s not going to be breached.”

“ Amazing.”

“ Thank you. Now, we’d best go before we’re late.”

Harry went over to the wall and created a door. He then used wandless magic to alter the wards a little, allowing Sev to enter the room whenever he needed. Once they were inside, they took a pinch of floo powder each and threw it in the fire, turning it green. Stepping inside one at a time, they called out their destination and disappeared into the floo network.

\*~\*~\*

Dumbledore had called a full meeting this time. Harry could tell as soon as he walked in the door. For normal meetings, only the most senior members were called, and they then passed on the appropriate information to those who needed to know it. This prevented too many secrets from being known by too many people. Different people were called under different circumstances, for instance chief researchers played no part in battles. However, as soon as Harry saw how many people were there, he knew it was to be a meeting for all members. It didn't happen very often, only when something important happened. When he and Sev took their places at the table, there were already over three hundred people in the ball room. Sev looked a little overwhelmed, but Harry simply rested a soothing hand on his shoulder and gave it a comforting squeeze. He knew it would be daunting for his young friend, but at the same time knew that his inner Slytherin would let him adapt fairly quickly to the situation he found himself in.

~Calm down, Sev. Don't look so nervous. It'll be alright. The Order members are all good people, and they will accept you no matter what. We have all sorts here, including vampires, werewolves and centaurs. A young Slytherin forced to be a Death Eater won't bother them~

~But what if they judge me...~

~I could say the same thing. I'm a little different to the last time they saw me. Don't worry, it'll be alright. I need you calm so you can show off your skills. They'll expect you to prove you can cope in front of Shirley, so there will be a test~

~TEST! You never said anything about a test!~

Harry could feel the rising panic in his young friend and sent waves of calming energy through the mental link. Just as the boy was starting to calm down, Harry spotted someone walking through the door who he really wanted to speak to. Quickly telling Sev to stay put, Harry bounded across the room, a large grin on his face.

“ Gaerwyn! Long time no see!”

The elf whirled around at the sound of her own language and smiled at her young friend. Opening her arms, she gave him a big hug, which he returned gratefully. When she pulled away, Harry could see a twinkle in her eyes.

“ Hello, Harry. It’s been a long time. How have you been?”

“ Not too bad. Apart from the fact that I’m part vampire now, thanks to an accident at the last battle.”

“ Oh, Harry, I’m so sorry. You must feel awful.”

“ I do, but I’m getting over it. I had a chat with a friend of mine who’s a werewolf, and he talked some sense into me. I’m still upset, and fighting off the depression I was in, but I’m putting on a brave face. I have to put it behind me and get on with my life. So, how have you been, Great-grandmother?”

“ I’ve been fine, Harry. What’s this about a great-grandmother?”

“ You’re my great-grandmother, didn’t you know?”

“ No, I didn’t. How?”

“ James Potter’s my father, and his mother is Minh.”

“ Of course! It never occurred to me before. Well, this is wonderful! Wait until I tell Lolide.”

“ Will she be coming to the meeting?”

“ Yes, she’s just talking to Poppy Pomfrey about some new medicine she came up with. Something that grows back bones. Anyway, do you know what this meeting is about?”

“ Well, I know it will be a general update for everyone, and the introduction of a new member.”

“ Surely we don’t need a full meeting for the introduction of a new member.”

“ This one we do. He’s a friend of mine, a Slytherin, which is the House I’m in this time. Over the Christmas holidays his father dragged him to a Death Eater meeting and had him initiated. The problem was, Sev didn’t want to follow Voldemort. So I suggested he become our new spy.”

“ And how old is this boy?”

“ Fifteen.”

“ Fifteen! You expect a fifteen year old boy to be the Order’s spy.”

“ Yes, I do. I’ve been training him myself, and I think he will do well. In fact, I know he will. In my own time he was a spy, and a damned good one at that.”

“ Well, I trust you, Harry.”

“ Would you like to meet him?”

“ Yes, I would. Where is he?”

“ I’ll take you to him. Just be sure not to tell him I’m a Potter. Or from the future. I haven’t told him, and I think it would be best if he didn’t find out.”

“ Why’s that?”

“ Well, he and your grandson don’t exactly get along...”

“ I see. Well, I won’t spill your secret.”

“ Thank you, Gaer.”

The pair headed over to where Sev was sitting, fidgeting in his seat. A few Order members were looking at him curiously, as he was the youngest person there, but no-one said anything. When he spotted Harry coming over, he looked a little relieved, but when he got his eye on Gaerwyn and noticed her pointed ears, his eyes went wide.



“ Hey, Sev, I'd like you to meet a dear friend of mine. This is Gaerwyn. Gaer, this is Severus Snape.”

“ It's a pleasure to meet you, Severus,” Gaerwyn said in her lilting accent, holding out a hand to the young Slytherin. Sev took it tentatively and kissed it, bowing his head slightly.

“ The pleasure is all mine, I'm sure.”

“ Oh, what a well mannered young man. You could teach my daughter a few things, I assure you. She was never very good at etiquette. She never had the time for it. So, I hear you are a friend of Harry's.”

“ Yes, he's in my House at Hogwarts. He's my friend and protector, as well as my mentor.”

Harry blushed as Gaerwyn gave him an appraising look.

“ Yes, that certainly sounds like my Harry. He's always been like that. Has a heart of gold, that one. You are fortunate to have him teaching you, as he has a vast amount of knowledge and training. Your job as a spy will be made easier if you are under his tuition.”

Sev looked over to his blushing friend and smiled. He knew he was lucky to have Harry helping him, and saving him from his father. He voiced this to the elf. Gaerwyn gave him a penetrating look.

“ Am I right in assuming your father is Satanus Snape?”

“ Yes, you are ma'am.”

“ I remember my daughter telling me stories of him, and his friend Caligula Malfoy. Am I right in assuming the Malfoy boy now has a son.”

“ Yes, his name is Lucius. He's two years older than me, and has been a Death Eater for a while. There's a sort of rivalry between he and Harry. It's quite amusing to watch, actually.”

“ I’m sure it is.”

At that moment, Dumbledore cleared his throat to get everyone’s attention, and the Order members fell silent and all took their seats. Once the over four hundred people were sat at the enlarged table, Dumbledore began.

“ It is nice to once again see the faces of the full Order spread out before me. It has been too long since our last gathering, and I had not realised how much our numbers have swelled. I have called you all here today to welcome our latest Order member, a young man who has offered his services in defiance of his father, who is one of Voldemort’s most trusted Death Eaters. Please welcome Severus Snape.”

Sev was shocked when the whole Order started to applaud him loudly. Looking around, he saw a sea of smiling and accepting faces, something he had honestly not been expecting. When his eyes landed on Ron, Ginny and Hermione, who had arrived with the last group, he saw that they were a little surprised to see him there. Harry obviously hadn’t told them about his troubles. Looking at his friend next to him, he smiled in gratitude.

~I told you there wouldn’t be a problem~ Harry sent to him.

~I’m sorry for doubting you. I see you didn’t tell your friends~

~It never came up. Anyway, it’s your business, not theirs, and I didn’t see the need in sharing it before it was necessary~

By this time the din was subsiding and Dumbledore continued with his speech.

“ Young Mister Snape was marked as one of Voldemort’s followers over the Christmas holidays, completely against his wishes. His friend and Housemate, Harry, convinced him to be our spy in the Dark Lord’s ranks, and I have called this meeting so we can test his skills in this area. Harry has been training him since he started his sixth year in September, and over the last two weeks has been honing his skills in deception and manipulation. Skills which will be vital if he is to act as a Death Eater, while remaining on the side of

the Order. He could potentially provide us with information that can help us to save many lives in the years to come. We will now collectively test his competence before reaching a final decision on his subsequent role in our organisation.”

With a wave of his hand, the table disappeared and the Order members stood up. Moments later, their chairs vanished as well, leaving everyone standing in the ball room, waiting for the headmaster to do something. Sev was starting to get a little worried, as he didn't know what was going on.

~Harry?~

~Yes, Sev?~

~What's going on?~

~You are about to be tested~

~Tested how?~

~You'll see. Dumbledore will explain~

The ball room suddenly turned quite dark, and Dumbledore's voice came from the shadows.

“ Severus Snape, you have agreed to be our spy in Voldemort's ranks. You will now experience an example of the situations you may be asked to face, and you will be graded on your reactions. If you perform in a satisfactory manner, you will be allowed to penetrate the enemy's ranks. If you fail to perform up to the standard we require, you will be asked to remain at Hogwarts until you have mastered the skills you need. Do you understand?”

“ I think so...”

“ Yes or no, Mr. Snape.”

“ Yes.”

“ Very well. We shall begin.”

What little light disappeared from the room, and Harry created a mental link with the headmaster.

~Now what, sir?~

~We test him. Would you like to do the honours? I believe you have the most experience with him, and would therefore be able to best replicate his behaviour~

~If you insist...~

Harry started waving his hand about, changing the appearance of the room and its occupants. He could hear Sev starting to breathe a little faster than was normal as he started to panic. With one last gesture, a faint light appeared above the crowd, and Sev's eyes widened as he realised what he was facing. Looking around, he could see hundreds of white masked faces staring out of black hoods. The room was different, looking more like a dungeon, with little light and moss covered walls. Where the stage had been stood a large stone throne, upon which sat a terrifying figure. Glowing red eyes looked out of a human face, different from that of the young boy, but not quite as snake-like as in the future. In front of Sev sat the malevolent figure of Lord Voldemort. The young Slytherin started to back up before realising this must be his test. *They must have recreated a Death Eater meeting to see how I would cope*, he thought. Setting his mask of indifference upon his face, he walked up to the figure and dropped to his knees, before kissing the hem of the emerald green robe. Remaining in that position, he awaited further instructions.

“ Ah, Severus, so you have joined us. Tell me, what do you know of the Order of the Phoenix?”

“ Nothing, my Lord.”

“ Surely you know something. Everyone has heard of it. Do you presume to lie to me, Snape?”

“ No, my Lord. All I know is that it is led by the Muggle loving fool Dumbledore, and opposes your rule.”

“ I see. Now, Severusssss, I have heard some very interesting news.”

“ Yes, my Lord?”

“ One of my spies in Hogwarts claims you are not completely loyal.”

“ I am loyal, my Lord.”

“ Do you question my spy? Do you question me?”

“ No, my Lord.”

“ If you are not questioning my spy, then you are agreeing that you are not loyal.”

“ I am loyal, my Lord. May I ask what your spy has seen to make you question me?”

“ He claims you are friends with one who opposes me. And friends with a Mudblood. Is this true?”

“ Yes my Lord, but I can explain.”

“ Do so, Severus, and you had better have a good reason.”

“ I do my Lord.”

“ Well? I am losing my patience.”

“ I befriended them to gather inside information.”

“ Go on.”

“ They are close to Dumbledore. I could gather useful information, my Lord.”

“ I see. Did I ask you to do this?”

“ No, my Lord.”

“ Then why are you doing it?”

“ I wish only to please you, my Lord.”

“ Look at me, Severus.”

Sev lifted his head and stared into the disturbing red eyes. He had forgotten long ago that this was not real, and was completely immersed in the situation. At this point, the figure before him was indistinguishable from the real Dark Lord. He shuddered slightly, but schooled his features to look indifferent. After a few moments, Voldemort grinned.

“ Would you like to join me, Severus? I am planning some Muggle torture, would you like to help?”

Sev shuddered a little but pasted an anticipating smirk on his face.

“ If it pleases you, my Lord.”

“ Very well. Bring in the prisoner,” the figure said to the nearest black clad figure. Moments later, a struggling woman was dragged into the room, kicking and screaming. Voldemort grinned and looked to Severus.

“ You may go first. Curse her.”

“ Yes my Lord,” Sev said, his face once again blank. Looking into the terrified eyes of the woman, he steeled himself before hefting his wand.

“ With what would you like me to curse her, my Lord?”

“ The Cruciatus, of course.”

Sev flourished his wand, and yelled out the damning word.

“ Crucio!”

The woman writhed in pain, screaming loudly. Sev had to suppress a wince, but pasted a look of glee on his face as the woman was tortured by his hand. Eventually, he lifted the curse and turned to Voldemort, bowing low.

“ Have I pleased you, my Lord?”

“ Did I tell you to stop?”

“ No, my Lord.”

“ You will pay for your insolence. Crucio!”

As the curse hit, Sev fell to the floor and writhed, pretending he was in pain. He felt only a tickling sensation, due to the necklace Harry had given him, but he knew he would have to pretend to be in pain. Once the curse was lifted, he lay panting for a few minutes before crawling to his feet and once more kissing the green robe hem. Voldemort let out a loud cackle, before the lighting returned to normal and Sev looked up from his place on the floor. Everything was back to normal, and he looked to the person standing before him and met the grinning face of Harry.

“ Well done, Sev. You did great.”

“ Harry? That was you?!”

“ Yup! How did I do?”

“ That was...incredible. After a few minutes I thought I was at a real meeting.”

“ That was the point. We had to make it convincing, otherwise it would hardly be a test.”

“ What about that person I hit with the Cruciatus. Is she alright? I didn't want to hurt anyone...”

~She's fine. It was Hermione you cursed, and she has an immunity necklace, so she didn't get hurt~ Harry answered mentally, so as not to give away the presence of the necklace to Dumbledore, who was listening to the exchange. Sev simply nodded to him. Once the boy had stood and looked at the rest of the Order, Dumbledore stepped forward.

“ Well, that was a most impressive display, my boy. I must admit, Harry did such a good job that I was almost convinced myself. You reacted admirably, Severus, especially in answering the question about your loyalty. Whatever answer you were to give would have angered the real Voldemort, but you handled it perfectly. You were also very convincing in torturing someone, even though I know you didn't want to. I think it is safe to say that the Order has its new spy.”



## Chapter Fourteen – Dreams and Threats

As soon as the Hogwarts group got back to the castle, Sev and Harry headed to the kitchens for a snack. The meeting had been draining for both of them, and they felt as if they needed a slight pick-me-up. On their way back to the Slytherin common room, Harry suddenly came up with what he thought was a wonderful idea. Smiling wickedly, he turned to a nervous looking Sev. The younger Slytherin had seen that look on his friend's face only a few times before, and the after effects weren't usually pleasant.

“ What is it, Harry?”

“ I've just had a most brilliant idea.”

“ I dread to think....”

“ You might like it. How would you feel if I played a trick on the Slytherins?”

“ As long as I wasn't involved, and I could watch, I wouldn't mind. Why?”

“ How convincing was my Voldemort act?”

“ You wouldn't!”

“ Watch me.”

With a malicious grin, Harry waved his hand over Sev, turning him invisible, so that the other Slytherins wouldn't see him and be suspicious. He then began to transfigure himself into the intimidating form of the Dark Lord. With a smirk, he led his Housemate back to the common room, stopping to whisper the password. When the wall opened, the chattering students didn't notice him right away, and Harry watched in amusement as he stepped in and cleared his throat. The Slytherins all turned towards the noise and froze when they saw who was standing there. With a sneer, Harry addressed them.

“ What sort of a welcome is this? I had expected more respect.”

Most of the students scrambled to prostrate themselves on the ground, while some simply stared at him in fear or confusion. Those who were from families who didn't support the Dark Lord didn't recognise him, but when he gave them each a cold stare, they quickly started to back up, some going so far as to run to their dormitories. As the room was organising itself, Sev slipped into a quiet corner to watch, wandlessly casting a silencing charm on himself incase he started laughing. It would ruin the whole prank if he did that. He watched as Harry strode forward, inspecting each of the crouching students, coming to a stop in front of Lucius Malfoy. When the blond boy realised he had been singled out, he started to tremble.

"Luciussss," Harry hissed, "You disappoint me."

"I apologise, my Lord."

"As you should. What do you have to say for yourself?"

"I'm sorry, my Lord. I was just surprised to see you...here."

"Am I not allowed to check up on my followers once in a while?"

"You are, my Lord. It's just..."

"Yes? I am losing my patience, Luciussss."

"My Lord, Dumbledore..."

"You think I fear that old man?"

"No, my Lord."

"You presume I am a coward?"

"No, my Lord."

"Then why do you mention his name?"

"My Lord, it is only that this is Hogwarts. It is supposed to be impenetrable..."

"Are you doubting my competence?"

“ No, my Lord.”

“ I think you are, Luciussss, and you need to be punished.”

“ As you wish, my Lord.”

“ It is my wish, Luciussss.”

Sev, standing in the corner, was having trouble holding in his laughter. Harry had backed Lucius into a corner, and the boy kept digging himself into an ever deeper hole. It was funny to see the Malfoy heir outwitted and cowed. However, a minute later, Sev was shocked when Harry started to hiss.

\*Simbi? Nirah? I need a favour\*

\*What do you want us to do, Harry?\*

\*Scare Malfoy. You don't have to bite him, just scare him a little\*

\*This should be fun\*

\*That it will\*

The two snakes disentangled themselves from Harry's wrists and slithered across the floor towards a trembling Malfoy. The whole room had frozen in shock when Harry had spoken Parseltongue. It was a well known fact that Voldemort was the only Parselmouth of that time, so it erased any doubts from the minds of the onlookers that this was in fact the real Dark Lord. As Simbi and Nirah started circling Lucius, the boy started to shake violently. Simbi slipped around his throat and nipped him a little, making sure not to break the skin. After a few minutes, the pair retreated to their place on Harry's wrists and the boy started to speak again.

“ If I wasn't in Hogwarts I would have punished you more severely. Our next meeting will not be pleasant.”

“ Y-yes m-m-my Lord.”

“ Lucius? Don't stutter.”

“ S-sorry my Lord.”

“ You will be, Lucius, you will be.”

That said, Harry waved his hand and he was surrounded by a cloud of green and silver smoke. Snapping his fingers, a loud \*pop\* sounded, and he turned himself invisible before he could be spotted. When the smoke cleared, there was pandemonium in the room when everyone saw that Voldemort had gone. Lucius stood up trembling and made it as far as the nearest chair before collapsing in a boneless heap. Some of the younger students were running around screaming, and the older ones looked rather pale. Those from Light families who had remained in the room looked the most shaken, and Harry felt a pang of guilt for scaring them like that. While everyone was distracted, he went over to the corner where he saw the faint outline of where Sev’s invisibility charm was wearing off and grabbed his friend by the arm, quickly propelling him up the stairs and into his room. As soon as the door was locked behind him, Harry removed the spells from both of them and the pair burst out laughing. Harry was glad of the permanent silencing spell he kept on his room; otherwise they would have alerted the other Slytherins. When Harry looked at his friend, he saw Sev had tears of mirth trickling down his cheeks.

“ Harry, that was priceless.”

“ I know. Did you see the look on Lucius Malfoy’s face?”

“ Yeah, I’ll treasure that memory for the rest of my life.”

“ Me too. I’ll file it away in my head along with a rather prominent memory of my old school rival being turned into a bouncing white ferret.”

“ A ferret? A bouncing one at that?”

“ Yup, that was a good memory. Ask Ron about it sometime.”

“ I will. Anyway, you never told me you were a parselmouth.”

“ You never asked. And it never came up.”

“ Can I see your snakes?”

“ Sure.”

\*Simbi, Nirah, come and say hello to Sev\*

~Hello, Sev~

~Hi Sev~

The young boy started when he heard the voices in his head, and raised one eyebrow at his friend.

“ They’re telepathic,” Harry explained, “ They are magical coral snakes. A mated pair. Simbi is the male, and Nirah the female.”

“ Magical? In what way?”

“ Well, being a mated pair, they can’t be separated for long or they die. I have a confession, actually. Over the Christmas holidays I put Nirah in your trunk so she could keep an eye on you. I had to put a charm on her so she wouldn’t die from being separated from Simbi, but it was only temporary. Any longer than the Christmas holidays and the charm would have worn off. They also have magic destroying poison. If they bite a witch or wizard, the poison destroys their magic, leaving them like squibs. As a matter of fact, I tried it out on Lucius’ grandfather Tiberius, and it worked like a charm.”

“ Wow! That’s amazing.”

“ I’d appreciate it if you kept their existence under wraps. If the Slytherins find out they are my pets, they’ll figure out my prank, and that could raise some awkward questions.”

“ Actually, I wanted to ask you about that.”

“ What?”

“ Your Shirley impression. How did you get it so accurate? I mean, I know you’ve seen him in battle, but how could you get every single detail of his physical appearance perfect? And his personality?”

“ I was hoping you wouldn’t ask that,” Harry said with a sigh, shifting a little on his feet.

“ You don’t have to answer,” Sev hurriedly added, but Harry simply shook his head and plopped down on his bed, signaling for Sev to do the same. Taking a deep breath, Harry started to explain.

“ Sev, you know I have faced him before, right?”

“ Uhuh.”

“ Well, once, when we were both younger, I had a duel with him. And won.”

Sev gasped and brought his hand to his mouth. He stared at his friend with a newfound respect.

“ What did you do with him?”

“ I wanted to kill him. I should have done, and saved the world a lot of hassle. But there were reasons I didn’t. Reasons I can’t explain to you, but you have to trust me when I say that they were good. Professor Dumbledore agrees. The point is, as a punishment for certain things, which I will explain at a later date, I did something humiliating to him.”

“ What did you do?”

“ I marked him as mine.”

“ What do you mean?”

“ What I mean is that I put the Dark Mark on his arm. If you look at one of the Death Eater meetings, you might see it. You know at the last battle when I got attacked by the vampire?”

“ Of course.”

“ Do you think I would normally allow something to sneak up on me?”

“ No, never. You’re too good a warrior to let that happen. I remember thinking that at the time.”

“ Well, what I was doing was distracting Shirley. He was fighting Dumbledore, and our illustrious headmaster wasn't exactly winning. So I stopped what I was doing and sent wave after wave of pain through his Dark Mark. It distracted him enough to let Dumbledore get the upper hand, which distracted the Death Eaters, making them easier to take out. Unfortunately, I was concentrating so hard on Shirley that I didn't see the vamp.”

“ That make sense. You really gave him the Dark Mark?”

“ Yes, I did.”

“ But how does that explain how you copied him so well?”

“ Well, as I have a link with him, I can use it for several things. I am the one who made the mark, so I control it. What I did at the meeting was open the link wider than I normally would when sending pain, and managed to copy some of his DNA. I took a sample magically, and used it to recreate his appearance. I also took a look into his psyche, allowing me to mimic his personality. Unfortunately, I can't read his mind; otherwise I could use it to gather information on his plans.”

“ You got into his head? Isn't that dangerous?”

“ Yes, but I thought it necessary. I don't know if it's going to have any side effects, so I'll just have to wait and see.”

\*~\*~\*

That night, while he was asleep, something happened to Harry that he hadn't experienced in a long time. He had started off dreaming of the usual things, such as having a life with 'Tea or getting to know his son. His sleep was even disturbed with the usual nightmares about the past. But then, something unusual happened. Harry's dreams turned more real, and the image of a green clad Voldemort materialised in front of the boy's dream self. Harry found himself in an elegantly furnished study, decorated with the typical green and silver. Voldemort was sitting at a desk, papers and books spread out before him and a quill in his hand. The boy edged forwards and glanced over the hunched figure's shoulders and glimpsed page upon

page of intricate hieroglyphics. The piece of parchment set in front of the Dark Lord seemed to be a translation he was working on. Before Harry had a chance to read it, Voldemort sat up straight and called out.

“ Malfoy!”

A familiar figure strode into the room and kissed the Dark Lord's robes. Although he was older than the last time he had seen him, Harry instantly recognised Caligula Malfoy.

“ You called, my Lord?”

“ Yes, I did. Bring me the Vivarian Codex book.”

“ Yes, my Lord.”

As the Death Eater left, Harry heard his nemesis muttering under his breath.

“ Time of Darkness ending...Prophecy of the Four...can't come to pass yet...I will be ready...need to translate the last passage...inconsiderate ancient Egyptians...could have at least written it in Latin...”

As the scene began to fade, Harry could feel himself formulating many questions. What was the Prophecy of the Four? And why did Voldemort want to read it so bad?

\*~\*~\*

The next morning at breakfast, Sev gave Harry a concerned look when the older boy slinked into the Great Hall and dropped heavily into his seat, resting his head in his hands.

“ What's up, Harry?”

“ Nothing, just didn't sleep well. I think I need to speak to Dumbledore, though. I believe I've discovered one of the consequences of what I did yesterday...”



“ What happened?!”

“ Let’s just say that my dreams last night were rather vivid, and more like the sort Ginny would have.”

“ Really? You should talk to the headmaster after breakfast. You have a free period, don’t you?”

“ I do. I doubt he would mind. I’ll just ask him.”

“ Alright.”

Harry closed his eyes and opened a mental link with the headmaster. Normally, this wouldn’t be any trouble, but his pounding headache and throbbing scar didn’t help his concentration.

~Professor?~

~Yes, Harry?~

~Is it alright if I come to your office after breakfast? I need to talk to you about something~

~Of course, Harry~

Opening his eyes, Harry nodded to Dumbledore and sent him a pained smile, before turning back to his friend.

“ Do you mind if we don’t talk? It’s just; I have a really bad headache.”

“ Sure, no problem.”

As Sev turned back to his food, Harry closed his eyes again and sent a message to the other time travellers.

~Guys, I’m meeting Dumbledore in his office after breakfast. Can you come?~

~Of course~

~Sure~

~Uhuh~

After pushing his food around his plate for a few minutes, Harry was about to go up to the office to wait when the post owls came in. Everyone grew silent as a large black owl soared over to the staff table, a smoking letter in its beak. It looked like a howler, except for the fact that it was a poisonous shade of green. The owl dropped its cargo in front of the headmaster before flying off out of the roof. Everyone waited with baited breath as Dumbledore poked it with his wand. The envelope sprang open, and a familiar voice filled the room.

“ DON'T THINK YOU CAN HIDE AWAY IN YOUR CASTLE FOREVER, OLD MAN. I HAVE A CUNNING PLAN, AND SOON, YOU AND YOUR PITIFUL ORDER OF THE PHOENIX WILL BOW BEFORE THE MIGHTY LORD VOLDEMORT. BE WARNED, ONE WRONG MOVE, ONE ATTEMPT AGAINST ME AND MY PEOPLE, AND YOU WILL FACE THE MOST PAINFUL DEATH IMAGINABLE.”

As soon as the voice faded away, the letter combusted in a cloud of green smoke, which floated above the headmaster's head in the shape of the Dark Mark. The students soon found their voices, and started to run about the Great Hall in a panic. Harry watched calmly, thinking that it was about time he headed to the headmaster's office. On his way out he couldn't help but think, *this is going to be a long day.*

\*~\*~\*

Dumbledore tuned up not long after Harry, followed quickly by Ron, Hermione and Ginny. Once they were all seated, the headmaster gave them all a cup of tea and offered them Lemon Drops. Once they were all settled, he asked the all important question.

“ Harry, what is this all about?”

Harry sighed deeply and started to rub his head where his scar was concealed. Ron, Ginny and Hermione paled, and exchanged glances. They hadn't seen him do that in a long time, but they all knew what it meant.

“ Sir, I had a dream last night.”

“ I see,” Dumbledore said a little skeptically. He couldn’t see the significance.

“ It wasn’t just any dream. In our own time, I used to have dreams about what Voldemort was doing at the time I had them. It was due to a connection I have with him through my scar. Obviously, as the incident that gave me the scar hasn’t happened yet, I haven’t had them since we left our own time. However, last night, I definitely had one.”

“ How is that possible?” Hermione asked, confused.

“ You know when I took Voldie’s form last night to test Sev?”

“ Of course,” Ginny replied.

“ Well, to make it as accurate a copy as possible, I opened the link I have with him through his Dark Mark more fully than normal. It allowed me into his psyche and copy his personality....”

“ ...and the link with his mind triggered the vision,” Hermione concluded.

“ I guess so.”

“ Why does your scar hurt? I mean, you’re rubbing it, so I assume it does,” Ron added.

“ It does. Did it never occur to you that I’m connected to everyone I’ve marked? Both Voldie and the Order members? You all have tattoos or other marks on you through which I contact you. Well, I have to have a mark that the connections are tied to. When I first created the Order marks, and later the one on Voldemort, I connected them to the one thing that was permanent and the least obvious.”

“ Your scar,” Ginny concluded.

“ Yes. That’s why it hurts, because I opened the link wider and it’s stayed open. I’ve started having the visions again because of it.”

“ So what happened in this dream, Harry?” Dumbledore asked.

“ He spoke of a prophecy he’s deciphering. From what I could tell, it’s in ancient Egyptian, and he hasn’t finished the translation.”

“ Do you know what it’s about?” Ron asked his friend.

“ Something called the Prophecy of the Four. I think it’s about Voldemort’s downfall.”

## Chapter Fifteen – The Prophecy of Four

The following two weeks passed in a blur. Ron and Hermione were spending more and more time together, doing 'couple things'. Most nights they would sneak out of their common rooms and meet at Corvus Corax, where they would find a quiet corner to occupy themselves. Ginny was spending her days with Remus, as she didn't really get on well with anyone in her own House. Remus, she felt, understood her well. They had similar personalities, and while their relationship was entirely platonic, there was a lot of speculation around the school about how close they had become. Ginny had spent the last full moon with the werewolf, and found that her presence eased Remus' transformations as well as taming the wild beast he became. While it was never as fool proof as using the Wolfsbane potion, she managed to keep him under control to a certain extent.

The rest of the Marauders were spending all of their free time in the library researching their animagus forms. They knew from the time travellers that they would have to know everything they could about the animals they would become before they attempted the final transformation. Occasionally, they would take the time to organise a prank, usually on the Slytherins, much to Harry's annoyance. James and Sirius had also resumed their feud with Severus. Although the Gryffindors were always the ones to provoke the situation, Sev had now learned how to fight back, thanks to Harry's lessons.

Harry himself had been spending most of his time on work. In his free periods he would do his homework and do some extra reading from several books he brought from the library at Corvus Corax. In public, though, he only read up on Light magic topics. In the evenings, before dinner, he continued his studies of the Dark Arts. After dinner and before Sev came for his lessons, Harry continued with writing his book. He was currently working on a text describing many lost forms of the Dark Arts. Over the years since he had started this particular hobby, he had completed five books, all of which he intended to publish once he returned to his home time. It was the one thing he did in this time that he didn't share with Sev. Although he taught the younger boy wandless magic, an art which had been lost since the Middle Ages, as well as having given

him the immunity necklace, he didn't teach any of the true ancient magics. Even ancient potions had been deemed off limits when he had discussed the issue with Hermione. In truth she didn't approve of his teaching the Slytherin anything as advanced as what he had covered already, but there was nothing she could do about it. Harry was his own person, and while he respected her opinion, he would not be swayed once he had made up his mind about something.

In the evenings, Harry continued with the lessons he had been giving Sev. The younger Slytherin was becoming quite adept at acting, a skill which would be most useful when lying to the Dark Lord. Harry had even disguised himself as Voldemort a few times for his friend to practice on, although every night after he did it he dreamed of what his arch nemesis was doing. It seemed that by the next day the link had closed itself fully, but for the first few hours he could see and hear a lot of interesting things. As well as teaching Sev to spy, Harry had also carried on with his other lessons. Sev was competent in his weapons training, and was very good at wandless magic, having reached a level close to Harry's. He still needed a wand for more complex spells, such as a Patronus, but anything covered in his year he found easy. Although he knew how to do things wandlessly, he did as instructed by his mentor and continued to use his wand in public. Harry had told him more than once that his new ability would be an advantage in battle, but only if the enemy didn't know about it. Sev had also been taught a lot of potions, and showed his passion for the subject on several occasions. With Harry's help, he was far beyond even seventh year level in his chosen field, and was quite proud of his skills. The one thing Sev had yet to master was the animagus transformation. As there was not much information to be found on velociraptors, he had to make do with what was available. He was having the same difficulties Harry had experienced when he first found out his form didn't exist. An extinct creature wasn't exactly the most convenient to have.

On the evening of the 18th February, Harry experienced a particularly disturbing dream. He had spent a good part of the evening as Voldemort, playing word games with his apprentice, trying to back the young spy into corners. Much to his relief, Sev was good at answering awkward questions without getting trapped in a lie. As he had been using the link for several hours, Harry's connection with the

Dark Lord was wide open when he went to bed that night. The thing that made this one disturbing, though, was not the fact that there was a lot of bloodshed and violence, but rather that the person involved was someone Harry knew rather well...

As soon as Harry closed his eyes, he found himself in familiar study, with the same furniture as always, and the familiar figure bending over tomes and parchment. After a few minutes of the same scene, Harry started to wander around the room, finally settling for reading over the Dark Lord's shoulder. This turned out to be a bad idea when Voldemort suddenly pushed his chair back and through Harry, before standing and leaving the room. Once Harry recovered from the shock of having a chair in him, he quickly raced out of the door and followed the stalking figure through an endless network of stone tunnels. After what seemed like forever, the pair ended up in a large throne room, the walls lined with various torture devices and shackles. Several Death Eaters stood off to one side, their whispering trailing off at the entrance of their master. As Voldemort took his seat on his throne, one of them stepped forward.

"M-master?"

"What is it, Snape?"

"We have the girl. She was hard to get, as she is an Order of the Phoenix member, but we got to her in the end."

"Very good, Satanus. Bring her in."

"Yes, my Lord."

Harry looked at the retreating figure of Satanus Snape in puzzlement. *What girl? How did they know she was an Order member? How did they get her? Why her?* These were just some of the questions swirling through his mind as Voldemort started drumming his fingers in the arms of his throne in impatience. After a few minutes, Satanus and Caligula Malfoy came back into the room, dragging an unconscious woman. Harry's heart sank as he realised who it was. He did indeed know her, which made him feel all the worse. As the young woman was dumped in front of the Dark Lord, the two Death Eaters melted back into the shadows, leaving their

captive in their master's capable hands. Harry flinched in anticipation when his enemy drew his wand and pointed it at the prisoner.

“ Enervate.”

Slowly, she stirred, eventually sitting up and looking around in confusion. When her eyes landed on the creature before her, she paled significantly and started to shake in fear. Voldemort simply smirked at her.

“ Hello, my dear. I suppose you're wondering why you're here.”

“ Y-yes.”

“ Well, let me tell you a story. Thirty years ago, when my old mentor Grindelwald was in power, he had two main opponents. One, as you surely know, was that Muggle loving old fool Albus Dumbledore. The other was but a child. A powerful child, yes, but a child none the less. Now, on the day of Grindelwald's defeat, this particular boy dared to challenge me, and through a stroke of luck, he won. Now, this boy disappeared soon afterwards, but I never forgot about him. The day my mentor fell, I vowed I would have revenge on the one who managed to defeat me. I searched for years, but to no avail. He was gone. Vanished. No more. I never solved the mystery. Now, at the battle at St Mungo's, I felt something I hadn't felt for years. Not since the little pest went missing. The brat has surfaced again, and this time I will have my vengeance. Do you know why I have told you this?”

“ N-n-no.”

“ You are my only link to him.”

“ H-how?”

“ His name was Harry. Harry Evans.”

Heather Evans gasped. This was not what she had been expecting, but she simply looked back at the Dark Lord in confusion.

“ W-what makes you think I would have anything t-to do with him?”



“ Because you and your sister are the only Evans’ with magical blood. You must in some way be related.”

“ But my family are all Muggles...”

“ I doubt that. He was an Evans, and so are you. Now, tell me where he is.”

“ I-I don’t know!”

“ Not good enough. Crucio!”

Harry turned away as his aunt was tortured, silent tears coursing down his face. He looked back only once the curse was lifted.

“ Tell me, little Mudblood, where can I find Harry Evans?”

“ I don’t know who you’re talking about!”

“ You do. Crucio!”

“ I DON’T!”

“ I don’t believe you.”

Lifting the curse after several minutes, Voldemort gave her an assessing look before snapping his fingers. Seconds later, Satanus was at his side.

“ Yes, Master?”

“ I much prefer to torture information out of my victims, but I am losing patience with this one. Bring me the Veritaserum.”

“ Yes, my Lord.”

A few moments later, Satanus returned with a vial of the familiar clear potion. Harry watched as he poured some down Heather’s throat and her eyes turned glassy. Voldemort smirked and started the questioning.

“ What is your name?”

“ Heather Marie Evans.”

“ Are you of any relation to Harry Evans.”

“ I may be, but I have no knowledge of the fact.”

Voldemort scowled. This was not the answer he wanted. He decided to try again.

“ Do you know the whereabouts of Harry Evans?”

“ No.”

“ Are you sure?”

“ Yes.”

“ CRUCIO!”

Heather screamed as the curse hit her, and Harry flinched away. Guilt was starting to eat at him. This was all about him. It was his fault she was being tortured.

“ Caligula! Administer the counter potion. I want her lucid when I dole out her punishment.”

“ Yes, my Lord.”

Once the counter potion had taken effect, the poor woman looked up into the red eyes in defiance, looking as brave as she could, despite Voldemort’s angry glare.

“ You may not know where I can find him, but you will still serve a purpose. If I can’t hurt him directly, then I’ll do it indirectly. I wonder what the Dark Avenger, Hope for the Light will say when his own relative is one of my Death Eaters. I can even have my very own spy in Dumbledore’s ranks!”

“ I WILL NEVER JOIN YOU!”

“ Who said you had a choice in the matter? Imperio!”

Harry watched in despair as Heather's eyes glazed over and she moved towards Voldemort, lifting out her left arm. With a smirk of triumph, the Dark Lord pointed his wand at the revealed flesh.

“ Morsmordre!”

\*~\*~\*

Harry woke up with a start, letting out a hiss of pain as his scar throbbed. As soon as his vision cleared and the pain subsided, he leapt out of bed and threw on a dark green robe before running out of the door. As he headed for Dumbledore's office, he sent out a call for all of the Order Council, the leaders of the Order, to meet as soon as possible. He met Dumbledore at the gargoyle, and created a door to his room without waiting. The headmaster gave him a curious look before heading through the door and starting a fire. While the professor was busy, Harry held open the door and was frantically sending mental messages to anyone at Hogwarts who had been called, including the teachers, the time travellers and Severus.

~All Order members, meet at the entrance to the headmaster's office to access the floo network~

Within minutes some of the teachers started to arrive, each one sending him a questioning look before running into the room and flooing to Corvus Corax. When Sev came pelting down the corridor with Ron, Hermione and Ginny hot on his heels, he started to slow when he saw his friend in the doorway.

“ Harry,” he panted, “ What's going on? Who called the meeting?”

“ I did. I'll explain when we get there.”

The five, being the last to arrive, went through the door, letting it close behind them. As soon as they reached Corvus Corax, Harry could see that the rest of the council was already there, Dumbledore trying to calm them down. The room fell into silence when Harry sent up blue sparks, and everyone took their seats, watching the seventeen year old intently. With a sigh, Harry addressed the Order.

“ I’m sorry to call you all at three in the morning, but I assure you, it’s important. Voldemort has captured Heather Evans.”

As soon as he said it, Harry felt a wave of guilt flow over him. It wasn’t helped by the astonished gasps of the other Order members. Looking around, he could see the horror and sadness on everyone’s face. Heather was well liked, and something like this was not taken lightly. Harry gave everyone a minute or two to absorb the news before continuing.

“ I’m sorry to tell you, but it gets worse. She was captured and tortured for information, before being given veritaserum to ensure she was telling the truth. I am proud to say that she did not give anything away under torture, and the only time she gave answers was under the truth potion. The secrecy spell prevented her from giving away any Order secrets, but I must warn you all. Voldemort has placed her under the Imperius curse, and has marked her as a Death Eater.”

This news startled everyone so much, that they started to frantically whisper amongst themselves. Harry had to send up more sparks before he could get everyone’s attention.

“ She refused to join him at first, hence the Imperius, but the fact remains that she is still marked. Voldemort intends to use her to spy on the Order. As you will notice, she is not here, despite the call I sent out. Domus Corvus Corax is warded against anyone who is a Death Eater, whether loyal or not. If someone bears the Dark Mark, they cannot enter the grounds. The one exception is Severus Snape, who I took into consideration when I created the wards. Anyone else to be marked, in this case it is Heather, cannot set foot within five miles of the castle. This is a security measure that may cause problems in this situation. Heather is not loyal to the Dark Lord. If it is discovered that she cannot come to meetings, and therefore cannot gather information, then she might be seen as expendable and killed. I’m sure none of you would like that. I therefore have an idea that will keep Heather alive long enough for us to capture her, as well as secure Severus’ position in the Death Eaters.”

“ What do you suggest, Harry?” Dumbledore asked.

“ I suggest we give her information outside of meetings. As Voldemort doesn't know how we operate, due to the secrecy spell, he doesn't know that we have meetings. We could have several people feeding her false information, laced with enough truth for it to be believable, which she will then report to Voldemort. If we tell Sev to pass on the same things, he will trust him more, as his information will correspond with what his 'spy' is telling him. Therefore, when we manage to free Heather, Sev will be highly trusted and will be able to pass on more to us.”

“ And you're sure this will work?”

“ I am, Professor Dumbledore. It's the only logical solution for the time being.”

“ Very well, then. Thank you for passing that on, Harry, I'm sure we can do a lot with it. Order dismissed.”

\*~\*~\*

When Harry got back to his room at Hogwarts, he flopped down in an armchair in front of the fire. As expected, Ron, Hermione, Ginny and Dumbledore joined him, the headmaster conjuring up tea and scones and placing them on a table in front of them. After a few minutes, Harry couldn't bear the silence any more and thought it best to get the conversation over with.

“ He took her because of me.”

“ What do you mean, Harry?” Ginny asked him.

“ He told her he had a grudge going back thirty years. A grudge against a certain Harry Evans. He assumed we were related and that she might be able to tell him where I was. He apparently looked for me after I defeated him in 1944, but gave up after a few years. When he felt his Dark Mark burn at the battle, he knew I was back. He's after me again, and he thought he could get to me through Heather. He said, before he put the Imperius on her, that if he couldn't hurt me physically, he would hurt me mentally, by getting to my family.”

“ And it’s working, isn’t it Harry?”

“ Yes, it is ‘Mione. If I had made different choices, such as using a different alias in the past, I could have prevented this.”

“ But you weren’t to know,” Ron interjected, “ How were you to know that this would happen? You weren’t! You cannot be judged, or judge yourself, for things that were done with the best of intentions!”

“ I *chose* to torment him! I *chose* to put the Dark Mark on him and snap his wand! If I had simply stunned him and left him, this may never have happened!”

“ Harry, you’re wrong,” Dumbledore said, “ If you hadn’t have tormented him, I agree that he may not have been as angry, but he would still have sought vengeance. If you had not put the Dark Mark on him, it could have had dire consequences. At the Battle for St Mungo’s, I would have eventually lost the duel if he hadn’t been distracted. It is also letting you see some of his plans, which are useful for the Order.”

“ And you have to remember, Harry, that if you hadn’t snapped his wand, he would never have gotten the one he used at the Triwizard Tournament. Priori Incantatem wouldn’t have happened, and you could have been killed. The Dark Mark may have been what saved you as a baby, as well.”

“ Hermione’s right, Harry,” Ron continued, “ You being a parselmouth was a result of that spell backfiring. If you couldn’t speak parseltongue, Ginny would have died in the Chamber of Secrets. You would also never have gotten Simbi and Nirah, and been able to read the power draining spell. Salazar Slytherin would have killed Lord Gryffindor!”

“ Don’t punish yourself, Harry. Your friends are right. The decisions you have made have consequences which are entangled in time in a more complex fashion than those of others. This time, the consequence was bad. However, if you had done something different, it would have unravelled the very fabric of time, causing an inordinate number of unsolvable paradoxes,” the headmaster explained.

Harry sat in silence, processing all that he had been told. Guilt rested heavily in his stomach, but knew deep down that they were right. Although he had been acting more like himself recently, despite his bout of self pity, he was still dangerously depressed. He knew, though, that he had to put on a brave face if he was to eventually defeat Voldemort. Remus' words in the hospital had helped, allowing him to acknowledge the fact that he was depressed, and needed to get out of it. It allowed him to get on with his life, while hiding his problems from his friends. He had quietly been working through his issues by himself, and this new piece of information had been a major setback. He knew, deep down, that one more blow could shove him back under, and that thought frightened him more than anything.

\*~\*~\*

The following night, after an extended lesson with Sev, Harry fell into bed knowing he would dream of Voldemort again. He had taken up his role as the Dark Lord for his friend to practice on, opening the link wide enough for him to have a vision. He wasn't looking forward to it, but from previous visions knew that Voldemort was close to finishing his translation of the prophecy. Harry had even begun studying the ancient Egyptian language in the hope that he could make a more accurate translation of it. The Dark Lord had been relying on literal translations, as he had no knowledge of the language itself. It was therefore likely that his interpretation would be sketchy at best. He couldn't understand why his nemesis didn't just use the translation spell he and his friends had used when they first met the founders. He figured that it was such a simple, and Light, spell that it simply hadn't occurred to the Dark wizard to use it.

As Harry closed his eyes and drifted off, he found himself in the study at Voldemort's headquarters. Much to his relief, the Dark Lord was doing little more than sitting in front of his desk reading over a tome full of interpretations of different hieroglyphic symbols. Harry took this opportunity to sneak a look at the scattered pieces of parchment lying on the desk, and gasped when he saw one with what must have been the translation so far. As he read over it, he muttered it to himself, trying to commit it to memory.

" Line of the Basilisk and line of the Lion,

Forever locked in mortal toil,  
Shall meet before the end of each millennium,  
In a battle to the death,  
The final fight shall come,  
Ten thousand years from this day,  
Where the Lion and the Snake will fight to the end,  
The Snake, backed by darkness, shall fall to the Lion,  
The Light will prevail,  
Helped by four,  
The Healer, the Seer, the Lion and the Wise One,  
The hope for all, the power of all, chosen by fate,  
To serve the Light for all eternity.”



## Chapter Sixteen – The Dual Heir

As soon as Harry woke up the following morning, he went to his desk and pulled out a clean piece of parchment and a loaded quill. Before he could forget it, he wrote out the piece of the prophecy he saw in his dream and read over it a few times. Some of it made sense to him, but there were also parts that didn't fit with anything. Rolling up the parchment, he put it in the pocket of his cloak, intending to go over it with Ron, Hermione and Ginny at lunch time.

After showering and dressing, he headed down to breakfast and dropped into a seat next to Sev. The younger boy gave him a worried look.

“Are you alright, Harry?”

“I'm fine, Sev.”

“You just look tired. Maybe you should take some Dreamless Sleep Potion tonight. I'll make you some if you like.”

“I'll be alright, Sev. I just had a strange night last night.”

Sev looked over to see if the nearby Slytherins were listening, before whispering to his friend.

“Did you dream about Shirley again?”

“Yeah, I did. I'll tell you later, though. Meet me in my secret room at lunch; we'll discuss it with the other three. Hermione's smart, I might need her to interpret some things.”

“Sure, I'll see you there.”

Harry thought it would be best to contact everyone else, and see if they would come. As soon as the other three were all in the Great Hall, he sent them a mental message.

~Ron? Hermione? Ginny? I have something important to discuss with you. Will you meet me in my room at lunch?~

~Sure~

~Yeah~

~Alright. What's up, Harry?~

~I'll tell you all about it later, 'Mione. I had a dream last night, and I know some of the Prophecy of Four~

~We'll be there. Are you bringing anyone else?~

~Sev's coming, but I think we should interpret it before we tell Dumbledore. He has more urgent things to worry about~

Harry would have told them more, but at just that moment, Lucius Malfoy came storming into the room. The Boy-Who-Lived could see the rage in his face, and started to feel a little uneasy. Although he knew he could beat him in a fight, he still remembered the adult Lucius he had met in the summer before his second year. He had been an intimidating figure to a twelve year old, and the way he looked now reminded Harry of that time.

"Anguifer, I want a word with you."

"Go ahead, Malfoy. No-one's stopping you."

"Why is my room pink?"

"That was a whole sentence, Lucius. I believe I permitted a word," Harry said with a smirk. Malfoy's look darkened.

"Just answer the question, Anguifer."

"Why would I know why your room is pink?"

"Because you were the one who changed the colour!"

"And I take it you have proof of this?"

"I DON'T NEED PROOF, YOU STUPID MUDBLOOD!"

“Calm down Lucius, you’ll burst a blood vessel. You wouldn’t want something like that to happen now, would you? It would ruin that Malfoy perfection now, wouldn’t it?”

“I will not have you lording it over me, Anguifer. You have no right to cross a Malfoy like this.”

“Really? Why would that be?”

“You need to have some respect for your betters.”

“Well, when I meet my betters, I’ll be sure to show them the proper respect.”

“I’ll show you! Serpensortia!”

When the snake burst out of the seventh year’s wand, Harry reacted instinctively.

\*Attack the blond boy!\*

Lucius gaped at his conjured snake as it turned to attack him instead of Harry. Those in earshot were giving Harry funny looks when they realised he had spoken in parseltongue. With a wave of his hand, the Slytherin placed memory charms on those who had heard before they could spread the word. The last thing he needed was word getting around that he could talk to snakes. It would be like his second year all over again. As soon as Lucius got rid of the advancing snake, Harry sent a curse at him in retaliation. It was one he had been meaning to try for a while, but the right opportunity had never presented itself. Now seemed as good a time as any. The attention of the whole hall was caught as Lucius Malfoy started to sing at the top of his voice.

“This is the song that never ends,

It just goes on and on my friends,

Some people started singing it not knowing what it was

And they’ll continue singing it forever just because,

This is the song that never ends,  
It just goes on and on my friends,  
Some people started singing it not knowing what it was  
And they'll continue singing it forever just because,  
This is the song that never ends...."

All of the students were laughing their heads off as the Malfoy heir tried to stop singing, with no success. Dumbledore, amidst chuckles, tried to reverse the effects but nothing he tried worked, much to Lucius' dismay. Eventually, the headmaster cast a silencing charm on him to shut him up, although his mouth was still moving constantly. Once the boy had been silenced, Sev leaned over to his friend.

"Harry, what did you do?"

"I made him sing 'the song that never ends' over and over."

"When will it wear off?"

"It won't. That's the point!"

"Will you take it off eventually?"

"Nope. As you could see, the headmaster couldn't break the spell. The only thing that can stop it is a shock of powerful Dark magic. I knew Dumbledore would never use that, which is why I set the spell that way."

"So, when will it end?"

"What will happen, Sev, when he goes to a Death Eater meeting? Do you think Shirley will stand for one of his servants mouthing something all the way through the meeting? He'll take off the silencing spell..."

Sev started laughing loudly, earning him some rather strange looks from his fellow Slytherins.

“ Harry, that’s classic! I just hope I’m there to see it...”

“ If you are, you have to tell me all about it.”

\*~\*~\*

At lunch, Harry went to meet his friends in his room. When he got there, he realised he was the first to arrive. He started to practice some sword work until a noise made him turn suddenly. Sev was leaning against the wall, watching him work in awe.

“ You’re really good, Harry.”

“ You should see Ron. He’s the master of the sword. Gin’s best with archery, and Hermione’s the martial arts expert.”

“ What do you specialise in?”

“ Duelling. I know more hexes and curses than anybody else, both Light and Dark. You see, I have the edge over both Dumbledore and Voldemort, both of which generally stick to their own branch of magic. I use both Light and Dark equally, giving me the advantage.”

“ I see. That’s why you always win in battles against the Death Eaters.”

“ Yes, it is. Always remember in future, use both types of magic. Normally, Death Eaters stick to Dark spells, as they are more powerful and make them seem superior for being able to use them. However, if you use Light curses as well, you can do just as much, if not more, damage without tiring yourself out.”

“ I’ll try and remember that.”

“ So, do you want to practice until the others arrive?”

“ Sure.”

Sev went over the armoury and pulled out a sword that suited his purposes and began a mock battle with Harry. Over the last six months of nightly training, the young Slytherin had become rather

good. He was nowhere near the standard of the time travellers, but he was better than others his age. When Hermione, Ron and Ginny came through the door, they stared in shock at the battling teens. Harry was moving effortlessly, his motions smooth and each flowing into the next. Sev was graceful in his moves, but more economical than Harry, exerting himself no more than necessary. What surprised the students was how well the two Slytherins worked together. Of course, the time travellers were used to working well as a team, and it was a bit of a shock for them to realise that Harry had built such a close relationship with their greasy Potions professor. After about twenty minutes, Harry noticed they were all standing watching, and faltered in his move, allowing Sev to open a deep gash in his arm. The younger boy immediately threw down his sword and went to examine the wound.

“ Harry, I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to...”

“ It’s alright, Sev. I got distracted. It was my own fault. It’ll heal in a few minutes anyway.”

“ How?” Sev asked in confusion.

“ You’re forgetting I’m part vampire. I heal fast when it’s only shallow wounds.”

“ Oh.”

At this point, Hermione thought it would be prudent to interrupt. To gain their attention, she cleared her throat. When they turned to her, she gestured for them all to sit down. Before he sat, Harry took the prophecy out of his pocket and duplicated the parchment, handing a copy to each of his friends. As the others read over it, Harry sat back in his armchair to assess their reactions. Hermione had a contemplative look on her face, as if she was trying to figure out the missing piece of a puzzle. Ginny seemed to understand some of it, but frowned as she read the last few lines. Ron and Sev just looked confused. Hermione was the first to comment.

“ Well, some of it makes sense, Harry. At least the first part does. After that, it gets a bit fuzzy. Some of the details don’t fit with what we already know.”

“ I know what you mean. I remember thinking that at the time.”

Before any further comments could be made, Sev stood up and picked up his bag. Turning to Harry, he gave him an apologetic look.

“ Sorry, Harry. I have to go to Transfiguration. I don’t have a free period like you four. I’ll see you at dinner.”

“ Bye, Sev.”

As soon as the younger boy was out of the room, Ginny let out a sigh of relief.

“ It’s just as well it’s the end of lunch. Some of the things we need to discuss are about the future, and you know we can’t talk about it while he’s here.”

“ I still don’t know why to trust the greasy git so much, Harry,” Ron said, “ I mean, you know what he’s like in the future. He hates you!”

“ Ron, what you have to remember is that Sev’s a spy. In the future, he’s mean and grumpy, but I was the one who taught him to be like that. Something I hated to do, but was necessary. Also, he hates me as Harry Potter, the son of James Potter. You’ve seen first hand that the Marauders don’t get on with him. They’ve not been too bad since I’ve been friends with them and Sev, as I’ve been keeping their confrontations to a minimum. But you can guarantee that as soon as we go home, they’ll be at each other’s throats again. One thing you have to bear in mind is that the Sev I know here doesn’t know that I’m a Potter. He’s learned to like me for who I am as a person, and hasn’t judged me because of my father.”

“ I suppose. But you’ll never get me to like him.”

“ I’m not asking you to like him, Ron. I just want you to be civil with each other. You managed it during the prank war, so I don’t see why you would stop now. Anyway, we have more pressing issues to discuss. Like the meaning of this prophecy.”

“ Well, we need to take it a line at a time, and see if we all agree on an interpretation. I mean, we may all have different ideas about it,” Hermione said, going into full research mode.

“ You have to remember, ‘Mione, that Voldie doesn’t know much of the ancient Egyptian language. He’s using dictionaries to interpret it, and some of the translation may not be entirely accurate. Why he doesn’t use a translation spell I will never know, but then again, he’s not the sanest person on the planet.”

“ That’s a good point, Harry, and we’ll take it into consideration.”

“ We should start with the first line,” Ginny said, “ ‘Line of the Basilisk and line of the Lion’, I’m assuming that refers to bloodlines. Probably Gryffindor and Slytherin. As far back as anyone can trace those families have been represented by snakes and lions. And Slytherin did have a basilisk in the Chamber of Secrets.”

“ True. Anyone have any other ideas?” Hermione asked. When she received shakes of the head in reply, she started to furiously take notes in a Muggle notebook.

“ ‘Forever locked in mortal toil’ probably refers to the feuds between the two families that have been going on for thousands of years,” Ron added, “ And ‘Shall meet before the end of each millennium’ fits with that. It was the end of the last millennium that Harry was in on the battle in the Chamber of Secrets between Salazar Slytherin and Godric Gryffindor.”

“ True. And it’s at the end of this millennium that Voldie’s causing trouble. Whoever the heir of Gryffindor is will have to face him at the end of the century.”

“ But I thought you were the one going to face him, Harry?” Ginny asked in confusion.

“ So did I. But I’m the heir of Ravenclaw, not Gryffindor, so I doubt it could be me.”

“ You’re right, Harry. It can’t be you. The lion symbol traditionally has nothing to do with the Ravenclaw family. Anyway, the prophecy



continues with 'In a battle to the death, the final fight shall come, ten thousand years from this day'. I guess that means that one line or the other will be wiped out ten thousand years after the prophecy was written. Harry, do you know how old the prophecy is?"

"I don't know, 'Mione. Voldemort didn't say. Quite old, I would say, if it was ancient Egyptian."

"I thought the Egyptian civilisation was around for thousands of years?" Ginny asked.

"It was. The magical one even longer than the Muggle one. The magical Egyptians flourished between eleven and eight thousand years ago. The Muggles were at the end of and after that period. It could be any time in between."

"How do you know so much on the topic, Harry?" Hermione asked the green eyed boy.

"I've been reading up on it, as well as learning some of the language. I might be able to get my hands on the original, and do a more accurate translation."

"That makes sense. Anyway, the next bit goes 'Where the Lion and the Snake will fight to the end, the Snake, backed by darkness, shall fall to the Lion'. That seems like Slytherin will fall to Gryffindor. The heir of Slytherin using Dark Magic, and the heir of Gryffindor using Light magic."

"Can't be Harry then," Ron snorted.

"What do you mean by that, Weasley," Harry said in an acid tone. Ron looked a little taken aback.

"Calm down, mate. I just mean that you're a Dark Wizard. You've said so often enough. You'd use Light and Dark Magic, not just Light."

"True. Sorry Ron, I'm just a bit touchy on the subject. I'm still worried people think I'm turning evil."

“ S’ok, mate. So, you think it means that the Gryffindor family defeats the Slytherin line once and for all?”

“ That’s the impression it gives,” Ginny agreed, “ The next bit supports that. ‘The Light will prevail’ means that the side of Light will vanquish the Dark forces, but the next bit’s a bit confusing. ‘Helped by four, the Healer, the Seer, the Lion and the Wise One, the hope for all, the power of all, chosen by fate, the serve the Light for all eternity’. What do you think that means? I mean, the Seer could be me, and the Healer could be Ron, but I’m not sure about the rest.”

“ ‘Mione would be the wise one,” Ron said with a grin, earning chuckles from his sister and best friend, and a blush from his girlfriend.

“ Ron! You can’t be serious.”

“ He’s right, ‘Mione. You’re the wise one, and I’m guessing the four refers to us. Of course, the wise one could be Dumbledore, or even another person altogether, but I think after everything that’s happened over the last two and a half years it’s safe to say we all have destinies. The next lines of the prophecy back this up. ‘Hope for all, the power of all, chosen by fate’ could mean we were fated to come on this trip. We already know that we were meant to come, as our presence has kept the timelines right. When Glenadade was born, we knew we were destined for greatness. Maybe this is what it has all been building up to.”

“ Harry’s right. We came here for a reason, and it’s all starting to make sense.”

“ I don’t get it, though. Harry can’t be the Lion. Sure, he was a Gryffindor when he was first Sorted, but we now know that he’s the heir of Ravenclaw, not of Gryffindor.”

“ I agree with Ron,” Ginny spoke up. Hermione had a sudden look of concentration on her face, as if she was trying to figure something out before a look of comprehension spread over her features. She looked up to her friends, who were shooting her questioning glances, before explaining.

“ I have a theory.”

“ Here we go,” muttered Ron.

“ Shut up, Ron. Have any of you ever wondered why Harry’s so powerful? I mean, magically. We know his vamp senses make him strong, but even before that he managed things no-one else his age could. Facing Voldemort so many times before and after we left. Even now, he can perform complex spells wandlessly, while the rest of us can’t. We got the same training as he did, but we are not magically strong enough to do the hardest spells without using our wands.”

“ What’s your point?” Ron asked in irritation. He hated being reminded how superior his friend was to the rest of them. Ron got jealous easily, and while he knew Harry had had a hard life, he still hated having it pointed out to him how strong Harry really was.

“ My point, Ronald, is that some of it can be explained away quite easily. His great grandmother is an elf. Elves are very powerful magical creatures, so naturally some of that would have been passed down through Minh and James. You can even figure his Ravenclaw ancestors into the equation. But think about that logically. While it would have an effect, how much of that power would have been diluted over a thousand years of marrying less powerful witches and wizard.”

“ I see your point, ‘Mione, but where are you going with this. Why am I so powerful, if it was diluted like that?”

“ I’m getting to that. Now, just imagine that each of those factors is figured in, but there is still an unknown quantity. Something not identified before. Something that combined with the elven and Ravenclaw ancestry to produce a powerful wizard.”

“ Are you going to get to the point any time soon, ‘Mione? We have charms in forty minutes.”

Hermione didn’t answer; she simply stood up and headed over to one of the bookshelves on the other side of the room. After a few minutes, she let out a triumphant whoop and headed back to her

friends. Sitting down, she placed an open book in her lap and stared at a bewildered Harry.

“ You all know Minh-Minh-Lama is a half elf, right?”

All three nodded.

“ Does any of you know who her father was?”

Everyone shook their heads. Hermione smiled and handed the open book over to Harry, who gasped when he saw what she was getting at. He looked at the staring redheads and whispered his great grandfather's name.

“ Ethelred Gryffindor.”

## Chapter Seventeen – Dark Plans

“ Say that again.”

“ Minh’s father was called Ethelred Gryffindor, the great great grandson of Godric Gryffindor.”

“ Are you sure?”

“ It says so right here, Ron. Do I have to show you the page?”

“ No, I believe you, it’s just...”

“ A lot to take in?”

“ Yeah.”

“ How do you think I feel? All I ever wanted was to be a normal teenager, and it seems like I’m always finding out new ways in which I’m special. I hate it. I don’t deserve it...”

“ Harry, don’t talk like that,” Ginny interjected, “ You have a destiny to fulfill. Not everyone can say that about themselves. The things that are special about you are simply the tools you will need to win, and fulfill your purpose.”

“ I know, Ginny. It’s just that I don’t like having a destiny. It makes me feel like I don’t have any control over my life. Like I was simply a weapon created for the side of Light.”

“ But you’re so much more than that...” Hermione said.

“ No, I’m not ‘Mione. Everything that has happened to us in the last two and a half years has been leading up to me defeating Voldemort. This ‘heir of Gryffindor’ thing is the last straw. I can’t take much more of this! I hate being special, I hate being the saviour of the wizarding world, I hate being the bloody Boy-Who-Lived!”

“ Harry, calm down, mate. You don’t have a choice.”

“ I know! That’s the problem. Ever since my first year I’ve been maneuvered into this position where I can take on the Dark

Lord. Dumbledore manipulated me into being the perfect Gryffindor, even before I tried the Sorting Hat on. Ever since, he's been pushing me into more and more dangerous situations in preparation for what he knew I would have to do one day."

" Harry! Don't talk about Professor Dumbledore like that!" Hermione said indignantly, " He's the only adult we can trust..."

" Open your eyes, Hermione! He's using us! I've been thinking about this a lot lately, and the more I think about everything that's happened, the more I can see how he's been manipulating everything in his favour. Who in their right mind lets three eleven year olds face a Dark Lord single handed? A Dark Lord so notorious, people fear to speak his name fourteen years after he supposedly died? Dumbledore knows everything that happens in this school, so you can't tell me he didn't know what we were up to. He *did* give me the invisibility cloak after all. And since we came back in time, he uses us as much as possible. We are usually the first line of defence in battle, even though we are only students."

" Harry, you don't get it, do you," Ginny whispered, " We are the first line of defence because we're good. We know more than anyone here, and we have skills that can be used against the Death Eaters. It's not some big plot to use you; it's a compliment if anything."

" Ginny, you know as well as I do that Dumbledore doesn't trust me..."

" What do you mean?!" Ginny asked in shock.

" He hates all things Dark. Ever since Percy's death, he's mistrusted me to some extent. He knows the type of magic I use, and he doesn't agree with it at all. If he wasn't using me for his own ends, do you really think someone as Light as Dumbledore would allow powerful Dark Magic to be practiced in his school? I mean, I've even been teaching Sev some Dark curses, despite my better judgment, because I know in his position he will need all the help he can get."

" But don't you see," Hermione pleaded, " Dumbledore only trusts Severus because you do. He was cautious about a Death Eater from

the start, especially considering Satanus Snape and the damage he's done. He trusted you when you said Severus was on the side of Light, so you can't say he doesn't trust you."

" 'Mione, I said he didn't trust *me*. He may trust my judgment, as he knows enough about me to see that I want the Dark Lord killed, and Sev will be essential in that. It's *me* he doesn't trust, not my judgment. He knows at the moment I'm firmly on the side of Light, and would do anything so see my parents' murderer annihilated."

" What are you getting at, mate?" Ron asked his friend.

" What I mean is that he knows I'm a Dark Wizard, and as such practice the Dark Arts. He doesn't like it, but he tolerates it because he is hoping to use my skills against Voldemort, and he knows in that respect we have the same goals. What he is afraid of is me becoming the next Dark Lord. Dumbledore knows I know more Dark Magic than Voldie, and he's scared I will become corrupted, and turn into a worse threat than the one at the moment. That's why he doesn't trust me."

" I see your point, Harry, but where did this suddenly come from? I mean, what has this got to do with you being the heir of Gryffindor?"

" Ginny, it has everything to do with it. I have just been proven to be more powerful than most, by a combination of ancestors. This will cause problems with our esteemed headmaster. If he knows I am the one in the prophecy, he will want to maneuver me into the role I am destined to play. This is what happened in the future, before we came on this jaunt. He was starting me on the road he thought I should be following in my first year. It will also back up what I said about him not trusting me. Tom Riddle was the heir of Slytherin, and as such was powerful enough to be a Dark Lord. You think Dumbledore will trust me more or less if he knows I am the heir of two founders?"

The other three all let out long suffering sighs. They could see what Harry was getting at, but they still thought he was wrong. It disturbed them that the Boy-Who-Lived had seemingly lost faith in his mentor. If he distrusted Dumbledore, it could cause factions in the Order of the Phoenix, causing innumerable problems. However, they

all had a niggling feeling in the back of their minds that Harry had a point. When they thought it through, as their friend had done, the headmaster did seem to have manipulated a lot of situations in his favour. They didn't trust his motives any less, but it gave them something to think about. Before Hermione could start arguing her point further, the bell rang for their next lesson. As they headed out of the door, Harry and Ron to Charms and Ginny and Hermione to Herbology, the four time travellers were all deep in thought, considering the prophecy and the ramifications it would have on the future.

\*~\*~\*

That night, during Sev's lesson with Harry, his Dark Mark suddenly started to burn. With a hiss, he dropped his sword on the floor and grasped his left forearm in a vain attempt at lessening the pain. Harry could instantly see what was going on and gently prised Sev's right hand off his arm. Pushing his friend's sleeve up, he looked intently at the angry black tattoo before holding his other hand over the blemish and starting to chant in the elven language. Seconds later, he released the arm and looked into the younger Slytherin's eyes.

"You'd better go."

"What did you do to my arm? It doesn't hurt any more."

"Elven healing spell. You'd better get ready."

Sev nodded, before rushing out of the door. Several minutes later, Harry was roused from his book writing by a frantic knocking on his door. When he opened it, he was met with a very flustered looking Sev, dressed in Death Eater robes and holding the familiar white mask in his hand.

"What's wrong, Sev."

"Harry, what do I do? I don't know how to apparate!" he said, breathing heavily.

"Calm down, you'll start to hyperventilate. What do you mean, you can't apparate? I would have thought that would have been a



requirement for a Death Eater. How else are you supposed to get to the meetings? How did you get there for your initiation?"

" My father apparated me there. He said he expected me to learn how to do it myself before the next meeting. I didn't know it would be this soon, and it completely slipped my mind. What am I going to do?"

" Don't worry, come in and I'll get you there."

As Sev stepped into the room and closed the door behind him, Harry was frantically trying to think of a way of getting his friend to the meeting. He knew that if he failed to show up, or was very late, he would be punished. While the Cruciatus wouldn't work on him, Harry knew that it wasn't the only torture spell the Dark Lord knew. As he was formulating a plan, he kept one eye on his young apprentice. He could see that Sev was scared out of his wits. He hadn't attended a meeting since his initiation, and despite Harry's training of him, Voldemort was still someone to be feared. Suddenly, it came to Harry what to do. Thinking about Sev's training had reminded him of his own link to Voldemort, and a smirk broke out on his face. At this, Sev gave him a nervous look, making the smirk into a genuine smile.

" I have an idea, Sev. But for future meetings, I'm going to have to teach you to apparate."

" You'll teach me?"

" Of course! Can't have our only spy getting in trouble now, can we? Anyway, I was going to teach you eventually, so it may as well be sooner rather than later."

" Thanks, Harry. So how am I getting there?"

" I'll take you."

" WHAT! Harry, you can't go to a Death Eater meeting?"

" Why not? If I turn myself invisible, no-one will even know I was there, and I'll be able to keep an eye on you. Moral support, in a way. Not that I doubt your abilities; after all, you have been doing

well with your training. If I'm there, though, I can get you out if anything goes wrong."

"Are you sure you'll be safe?"

"I'll be fine. And I might pick up on things you may miss. After all, you will have to avoid getting killed, so you can't afford the luxury of snooping around."

"True. We'll have to go soon, though. After all, we can't apparate off of Hogwarts grounds."

"I know. We'll floo to Corvus Corax. We can apparate from the portkey room there."

Without further ado, Harry created the door into his room and the pair flooed to Domus Corvus Corax. When they came out of the fire place, they saw a few curious Order members milling around. Harry called the nearest one over and asked her to contact Dumbledore to call a council meeting. He told her where the pair was going, so the headmaster wouldn't worry when he didn't turn up at the meeting right away. After that, they headed to the apparition point where Harry turned himself invisible before grabbing Sev's arm and disappearing with a faint \*pop\*.

When the two appeared at the meeting, they saw they were in a clearing in a forbidding looking forest. Harry briefly wondered why the meeting wasn't being held in Voldemort's throne room like it usually was. His thoughts were interrupted, though, by numerous \*pop\*s on all sides of him. Sev had started to shake slightly as the rest of the Death Eaters appeared and arranged themselves in a circle. Harry thought he had best do something to reassure his friend.

~You'll do great, Sev. Just remember, keep your face blank of all emotion, and look as if you love the evil bastard. If you get too scared, picture him in his underwear~

Sev started at the last remark and scowled in Harry's general direction.

~That's not the sort of mental image I welcome, thank you~

~Sorry, I just thought it might calm you down. You look too tense, try and act more natural~

~It's all well and good for you, Harry, you get to be invisible~

~Well, if you were invisible, do you really think it would get Shirley to trust you?~

Sev let out a slight snort at the name, causing some nearby Death Eaters to look at him in disapproval. Sev simply scowled back, giving as good as he took.

~What do I do if he starts questioning me? How do I know what to tell him and what not to tell him?~

~I'll let you know~

~That's very comforting, thank you~

~No need for sarcasm~

At that moment, their mental conversation was interrupted by the entrance of the Dark Lord. He looked just the same as he did when Harry saw him at the battle. His red eyes looked critically over the assembled Death Eaters. Some of them started to shuffle uncomfortably, but luckily Sev wasn't one of them. While the Dark Lord was perusing his troops, Harry started sending a mental message to his familiars.

~Simbi, Nirah, can you have a look around?~

~Sure~

~Alright~

~Watch you don't get stood on, and beware of Nagini~

~Who's Nagini?~ Simbi asked.

~Nagini was Voldemort's snake in my time. I don't know if she's around in this time, but just in case, watch out for a big snake, and if you see one make sure to avoid her~

~Of course we will~

The two coral snakes slipped to the ground and made their way through the Death Eater ranks, just as Voldemort decided it was time to address his followers. Harry quickly cast a silencing charm on himself and Sev as Voldemort called forward the first Death Eater.

“ Luciussss! I want your report.”

Lucius Malfoy stepped out of the crowd, shaking more than he normally would have done. After bowing to his master and removing his mask, he looked fearfully at the Dark Lord. Voldemort was giving him a bewildered look as the young boy stood silently, his mouth moving constantly and a pained look on his face. Eventually, Voldemort started to lose patience and lifted his wand.

“ Finite Incantatem.”

“ This is the song that never ends,

It just goes on and on my friends,

Some people started singing it not knowing what it was

And they’ll continue singing it forever just because,

This is the song that never ends,

It just goes on and on my friends,

Some people started singing it not knowing what it was

And they’ll continue singing it forever just because,

This is the song that never ends....”

It was just as well Harry had cast the silencing charms, because he and Sev couldn’t help their hysterical laughter at Voldemort’s shocked face. Caligula Malfoy, who was stood next to his master, had a look of equal shock and anger, while Satanus smirked evilly. Lucius simply carried on singing.

“ This is the song that never ends,  
It just goes on and on my friends,  
Some people started singing it not knowing what it was  
And they’ll continue singing it forever just because,  
This is the song that never ends....”

Voldemort recovered from his shock suddenly and pointed his wand at the singing boy.

“ Crucio!”

Lucius stopped singing and started to scream loudly. When the curse was lifted, the seventh year lay on the floor in silence, catching his breath. Harry took the opportunity to remove the silencing charms and speak to Sev.

~I told you a shock of powerful Dark magic was the only think that would break the curse~

~You planned this!~

~But of course!~

~How Slytherin of you~

~Thank you~

By this time Lucius had dragged himself to his knees and was starting his report.

“ I apologise, my Lord. A boy at school cursed me to sing, and even Dumbledore couldn’t remove it. I am awed by your power, Master.”

“ Stop sniveling and get on with it.”

“ Sorry, my Lord. I have little to report. The Anguifer boy is still causing trouble. He is close to Dumbledore, possibly a member of the Order of the Phoenix, and he is magically powerful. I have also

seen him using the Dark Arts, though, something which the Muggle loving old fool does not condone. He would make a great Death Eater, my Lord.”

“ Then you will try to recruit him, Luciussss. If he is loyal to Dumbledore, and can be turned, we may have an excellent spy. If he won’t join us, I’m sure he can have a Quidditch accident or something...”

“ Yes my Lord.”

“ Oh, and Luciussss?”

“ Yes, my Lord?”

“ Crucio!”

Once the screaming stopped and Lucius had dragged himself back into the Death Eater ranks, Voldemort paced in front of his followers for a few minutes before turning to them.

“ I have called you all here for a purpose. I have completed the translation of the Prophecy of the Four. Having interpreted its words, I have surmised that at the end of this millennium the Heir of Gryffindor will stand against me and win. Personally, I don’t like the idea of that. I have decided, therefore, to eliminate the problem before it arises. If I kill the heir now, before he is powerful enough to oppose me, the prophecy will never come to pass. I will get to the root of the problem long before the flower grows. I therefore have a task for you all. I want each and every one of you to hunt for the family I must destroy. It is unlikely their name will still be Gryffindor, so you will have to look into family records. Once you have found the Gryffindor descendants, I will destroy the Line of the Lion once and for all.”

## Chapter Eighteen – Full Moon Fun

Harry froze when he heard Voldemort's plan. He knew what would happen, how the whole thing would play out. This was the decisive event he was now witnessing. The one meeting that would lead, in five year's time, to the death of his parents. He now knew specifically why the Potters had been targeted, why Voldemort had chosen them specifically to be killed, and why he had been orphaned at little over a year old. Some of the questions that had been plaguing him for years were finally answered. The puzzle with so many missing pieces was now complete. Everything he had been meaning to find out from Dumbledore since the end of his first year now came into sharp focus. He had suspected the reason, and had come up with some fanciful ones of his own, but now he was faced with the grim reality of the situation, and he wished he had never found out. Of course, it was a relief to finally know why he had been left at the Dursleys, and what the reasoning behind Voldemort's obsession with him was. He also realised that something else made sense. When his parents had been killed, Voldemort had told his mother to stand aside. He knew that much from his encounters with the Dementors. He now understood that he and his father were the heirs of Gryffindor, and not Lily. On the other hand, if Heather was anything to go by, then Voldemort may have planned to take his mother if she had lived to use as the same form of mental torture on his unseen enemy as her sister.

When Harry thought about it carefully, he realised that it would in fact be five years before his parents were killed. He also understood why. From what he had recently learned, Minh's father was a Gryffindor. As her parents were never recorded in the human world, only in the elven realm, Voldemort would not have been able to find out the relation. Harry was confused by this. Even if it had taken five years for the information to come to light, it still seemed strange that the information had been leaked somehow. Minh never told anyone that he was aware of. He would have heard about it. And Gaerwyn wouldn't tell. She was wise, and was sure to recognise the danger of announcing her grandson to be Gryffindor's heir when the heir of Slytherin was rising to power. Harry's brow wrinkled in thought. He couldn't imagine how it could possibly have come to pass that anyone would give up such a closely guarded secret.

Harry was dragged from his thoughts by cheering from the assembled Death Eaters. His head snapped around as a tall woman was led forward, a blank look on her face and dull empty eyes looking forward towards her 'master'. Harry let out a loud gasp as he recognised Heather. A nearby Death Eater looked around at the noise, wondering where it had come from. Harry slapped a hand over his mouth and cautiously moved back over towards Sev. As he made his way to his friend, he called back his snakes. He had a feeling he would need to leave soon, although he couldn't understand why. *Better safe than sorry*, he thought as he quickly opened a mind link.

~Simbi? Nirah? Come back now. We'll be leaving soon~

After a few minutes, the pair of snakes came through Crabbe Sr.'s legs and attached themselves to Harry's ankles. Relieved to have them back, Harry turned his full attention to the monster in front of him, who had his arm around Heather in a way that made Harry's blood boil.

" My loyal Death Eaters. I am proud to present our spy in Dumbledore's ranks, and the ticket to my nemesis' downfall. Some of you will know this, but most of you won't. She is a trusted member of the Order of the Phoenix, and with my Imperius curse in place will be an invaluable asset. She is also a relation of Harry Evans, a wizard who has plagued me for thirty years. Last time, he got away with his life. This time, he will not be so lucky. But first, I will show him what a Dark Lord is really capable of. With the help of my young concubine, I will truly break him once and for all."

As soon as Harry heard the word 'concubine', his temper started to rise. Anger flowed through him until he was balling his fists so hard, blood was trickling onto the floor. *How dare he? She's just a young woman. He's pay for this*, he thought as he imagined the implications that single word had. As his wrath reached a peak, he unleashed his rage through the Dark Mark on Voldemort's arm. Immediately the Dark Lord let go of Heather and grabbed his throbbing limb with a cry. The Death Eaters watched in shock as their Lord and master screamed out in agony and fell to his knees, tears of pain flowing down his cheeks. Harry watched in grim amusement as his enemy



squirmed and humiliated himself in front of his followers. It brought him little satisfaction, but it did give him a reasonable outlet for his fury. After about ten minutes, Harry's ire had calmed to a reasonable level, although he was still looking at Heather in pity. He knew he couldn't help her, as Dumbledore needed her to feed false information to the Dark Lord. This made him more than a little disgruntled at Dumbledore, especially now that he knew what his aunt had to be going through.

Once Voldemort had recovered from the searing pain, he stood and looked out across the sea of masked faces. The Death Eaters were shuffling in place, uncomfortable with their Lord's scrutiny. After a minute or two, Voldemort realised what had to be going on.

"Evans. I know you're here. It's the only explanation for what just happened. Come out now, or I'll do something to the girl."

Harry watched in fear as Voldemort wrapped both hands around Heather's delicate neck and began to squeeze. The Boy-Who-Lived suddenly realised where his anger had gotten him, and a pool of guilt settled in the pit of his stomach. He closed his eyes for a moment, before reaching a decision. *I may as well do a little damage while I'm here*, he thought. With a wave of his hand, Harry turned Sev invisible while the Death Eaters were distracted, before sending him a mental message.

~Sev, do you want to have a little fun?~

~Define fun. You seem to be in a bit of a fix. What are you going to do, Harry?~

~Trust me. Change shapes and start attacking the nearest Death Eaters. It should keep them busy for a while~

~Do I have to hurt people?~

~I'm afraid so. In the future you're going to be asked to do worse things for Shirley. You may as well practice on the bad guys~

~I suppose...~

Seconds later, Sev turned into his animagus form, the transformation for which he had completed only recently in his lessons with Harry. He let out a low growl, which was mirrored from a space to his right, where he realised Harry must be. As one, the invisible force of the leopard and the velociraptor started attacking the Death Eaters. Voldemort could only gape as his followers fell to a force they couldn't see, and therefore couldn't fight. The other Death Eaters, having realised what was happening, started to disapparate. After a few minutes, once the meeting was in total chaos, Harry made his way over to where his Housemate was and grabbed him by the tail, disapparating the pair of them back to Domus Corvus Corax.

\*~\*~\*

“ Well, that went well,” Harry said as he led Sev into the ball room.

“ In what way!?”

“ The bit with Lucius was funny.”

“ Well, yeah, but did you have to attack him? He knows that you know his plan now.”

“ Yes, but at least if he finds out Dumbledore knows, he'll assume I told him. It'll take all suspicion off you.”

“ True, I guess. And I did get to try out my form in a combat situation...”

“ See? A success all round!”

By this time the pair had reached the table, and turned to look at the silent figures waiting patiently for them to return. They both gave the Order council a sheepish grin before taking their places.

“ What's this about a combat situation? I thought it was a simple information gathering mission,” Dumbledore started.

“ Well, it began that way sir, but it got a little out of hand...”

“ Explain.”

“ Well, I got angry, and gave myself away...”

“ Harry! How could you do something like that? You endangered the life of our one and only spy!”

“ No I didn’t! I just stirred up a little trouble...”

“ What happened?”

Harry took a deep breath and explained from start to finish what happened at the meeting. As he explained what happened to Lucius Malfoy, the other time travellers all started to laugh quietly, and even the stern looking headmaster seemed to soften a little at the tale. Once he was finished, Harry sat back and waited for his mentor to pass judgment.

“ Well Harry, I think it was a little irresponsible of you to lose your temper like that, as it could have done a lot of damage. But, seeing as there seem to be no ill effects, I will let it slide this time.”

Harry let out the breath he had been holding and slumped back into his chair. He knew he shouldn’t have lost it like that, but the thought of his aunt being Voldemort’s concubine didn’t sit well with him. If he had had his way, he would have attempted to rescue her there and then. He knew he would not be able to do that, though, as she was needed to secure Sev’s position in the Order. Looking over to his friend, he realised that he had to consider the consequences if he was found out. They had become close friends in the last few of months, and he wanted to protect his friend for as long as possible. When he thought it through, though, he decided that he would make sure Heather was rescued before he went on to the next time period. He didn’t trust Dumbledore to pull her out if he wasn’t there to make sure it happened. He still had several months left, and that would have to be enough to convince Voldemort of Sev’s loyalty. As the Order meeting was wrapped up and the members dispersed, Harry couldn’t help but feel guilt for what his aunt was going through. It was his fault, and he knew it. The question was, would she ever forgive him?

\*~\*~\*

The following weekend found Harry, Ron, Hermione, Ginny and the Marauders gathered in a secret room Sirius had found the year before. After years of studying, James, Sirius and Peter were all finally ready to attempt the animagus transformation. Sitting in a circle with the time travellers and Remus, they all closed their eyes and thought over the information they had researched since Christmas. Harry and his friends gave the three some last minute tips and talked them through the process once again. After a few moments, the time travellers and Remus were surrounded by galloping animals. James tossed his head from side to side as he leapt around the room, Sirius hot on his heels and barking happily. Peter wandered around by himself, sniffing various corners before moving on. Remus had a huge grin on his face, and the others could see tears of emotion welling in his eyes. The four sixth years looked at each other before turning into their animals and taking off after James and Sirius. The latter gave a loud yelp as Harry pounced on him, and James played with Ron, racing him around the room. The thestral was the clear winner, but the stag simply poked him with his antlers and took off again. Hermione and Ginny flew around the room, the younger girl swooping down to land next to Remus, who was looking a little left out. Transforming, she put her arm around her friend as they watched the others frolicking.

“ What’s wrong, Remy?”

“ Nothing.”

“ I don’t believe you.”

“ I’m fine. Really.”

“ Sure, if you say so.”

“ It’s just...”

“ What?”

“ How can I ever thank them? I mean, they did all this, just so they could accompany me on the full moon. I’ll never be able to repay them.”

“ Remus, true friendship is based on love and loyalty. If they really are your friends then they won't expect you to do anything in return. They did it because they are loyal friends who just wanted to make your transformations easier to deal with. It's a wonderful gift, and I know you feel indebted, but if you tell them you want to pay them back, in any way at all, then there's a good chance they'll feel insulted.”

“ You really think so?”

“ I know so.”

“ Thanks, Gin.”

“ What for?”

“ Being my friend.”

The pair was interrupted by Sirius, who slid to a halt in front of them, panting, and changed back to his human form.

“ That was great! I can see why you four enjoy your forms so much. Thanks for helping us; we never would have finished it without you.”

“ It's fine, Siri. I'm sure you would have managed it eventually.”

“ Sure, after we'd left school maybe. We can go with you two tomorrow night.”

That had been the point of completing the transformation. The full moon was the following night, and the Marauders wanted to make it their first excursion with the werewolf. Ginny had been with Remus the last few months, just to make sure she could control him. She had told the three fifth years and the other time travellers how to best subdue a werewolf during the lessons, and they all felt reasonably prepared. This first time, Harry, Ron and Hermione were accompanying the group just in case anything went wrong.

“ I'm looking forward to it, Sirius,” Remus said.

“ I never thought I’d hear the day when Remy was looking forward to the full moon,” James said as he came up behind the three.

“ Did you enjoy yourself, James?”

“ I did, Ginny. Where’s Peter gone, by the way?”

“ I don’t know. He was sniffing around in the corner the last I saw him, but that was a while ago.”

The four sat and watched their friends for a few minutes before everyone eventually returned to their human forms and they sat together in front of the fire.

“ You know, we need nicknames,” Sirius announced.

“ Good idea, Siri.”

“ I know it is James. All my ideas are good.”

“ Really? What about the one you had last June...”

“ Now, we don’t need to talk about that,” Sirius quickly interrupted, looking into the laughing eyes of his friends.

“ What happened?” Ron asked.

“ No force on this earth would make me tell you that story,” the dark haired boy replied.

“ Not even veritaserum?”

“ Not even.”

“ So what are we going to call ourselves?” Remus asked.

“ Well, you should be Moony,” Sirius said with a smile.

“ I like it. What about you?”

“ Well I’m a dog, so something canine orientated.”

“ How about Padfoot?” James suggested.

“ Perfect! I like it. And you couldn’t be anything other than Prongs!”

“ What about me?” Peter asked.

“ Anyone have any suggestions?” Remus asked.

“ Wormtail,” Harry whispered.

“ What was that, Harry mate?” James said.

“ Wormtail.”

\*~\*~\*

The following night had everyone following Remus to the Whomping Willow, the Marauders under James’ invisibility cloak, and the time travellers invisible of their own accord. Once they all got to the Shrieking Shack, James hid his cloak in a corner where it wouldn’t get damaged and they all sat around to wait. As soon as Remus felt the change begin, he curled up in a ball on the floor, which was the others’ cue to change. Soon the Shack was looking like a proper menagerie, with animals of all kinds strolling around. It didn’t take much to subdue the werewolf, and soon the eight friends were leaving the safety of the Shrieking Shack and heading into the Forbidden Forest. They spent the night chasing each other around, investigating the forest floor and visiting the various animals that resided there. James and Sirius were delighted when they ran into a herd of centaurs, but the highlight of Harry and Ron’s time there was when they met some unicorns. As they all knew, only virgin girls could approach the creatures, yet in animal form the unicorns paid them little attention. They looked a little nervous when they saw Harry was a predator, but when he bowed his head to them slightly in respect, they ignored him.

As they were headed back towards Hogsmeade in the early hours of the morning, they were surprised to meet a few grazing thestrals. When Ron first saw them, he bounded over and greeted them with a whinny. Harry watched in amazement at the creatures. He never knew that the Forbidden Forest was home to

thestrals, as he had never seen any before on any of his trips there. While he knew they pulled the Hogwarts carriages, it had never occurred to him where they would live for the rest of the year. Watching his best friend, he made a mental note to ask Hagrid about them when they returned to their own time.

Eventually, the sky began to lighten and the group headed back to the Shrieking Shack, where they watched as Remus changed back into his human form. The young boy collapsed on the floor in exhaustion as soon as the transformation was complete, and James and Sirius had to pick him up and carry him back to Gryffindor Tower. Before the time travellers parted ways, Hermione turned to them all and smiled.

“ We did a good thing here. Helping them will make Remus’ change more bearable in the future.”

“ I know, ‘Mione. And Sirius’ animagus form will be useful when he’s on the run.”

“ Yeah. We did good.”

“ That we did.”



## Chapter Nineteen – April Fool!

The weeks after the Death Eater meeting passed rather quietly. The time travellers and Marauders had become closer since that first full moon together, and spent more time planning pranks together. Sev and Harry continued to work on weapons training and duelling skills, as well as apparition. Harry had no desire to have a repeat of the last meeting. The sooner Sev could go on his own, the better. Like most things, the fifth year picked it up fairly quickly, and soon the pair was escaping to Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley at the weekends without anyone noticing. They felt they needed some relief from their hectic lives, and didn't see the harm in taking a few unauthorised excursions.

By the time April rolled around, everyone had become a lot more relaxed. Voldemort had been particularly quiet, which seemed to lull everyone into a false sense of security. Even the ever vigilant Alastor Moody was relaxing his constant guard a little, although he was still as paranoid as ever. The joys of the springtime months came to a head on the morning of April 1st. The students were dismayed when all they found for breakfast was sawdust and hay. Looking to the teachers, they saw the staff to be equally confused. Eventually, Sirius took pity on them and stood up, coughing to grab everyone's attention.

"Happy April Fool's Day!" he said with a grin. The whole student and staff population, with the exception of the Marauders, Ron and Harry, groaned. The pranksters all smirked evilly and exchanged knowing looks. The Marauders had been working tirelessly for the last couple of weeks with Ron, Harry, Peeves and Gallatea to come up with enough pranks for the day to be unforgettable. Harry got out his Mischief Making Kit, the one he received from the Weasley twins before he came on the crazy trip, and used some of the products in there on the teachers. As the things in it were original to Ron's brothers, no-one knew where they came from, making them original and highly amusing.

By the time lunch came around, the students were highly irritated. Potions had been a disaster when everyone found their cauldrons to be lined with an invisible substance unknown even to Professor Sewell. Whenever students tried to make a potion with a

combination of Asphodel and unicorn tail hair, the effects of their work would be a little different to usual. The potion would release a vapour, leaving those unfortunate enough to have had the subject that morning speaking nothing but ancient Aramaic. People who had Charms were also affected by an irritating charm. Anyone who passed through the door would be spelled to attract anything metallic. Chairs, tables and cutlery all went flying toward the unfortunate few who had entered the classroom before Professor Flitwick had arrived.

At the end of lunch people started to get a little worried when the Marauders, past and present, all pulled out umbrellas. Everyone looked at the roof of the Great Hall in trepidation, some even trying to run out before the inevitable prank began. Those who tried found themselves thrown back into the room by an invisible force and covered in eel slime. Some of the girls squealed at the mess, but everyone grew silent as it started to rain pencil shavings. Those from pureblood families couldn't understand what the small pieces of wood were. The slimy people, though, groaned in frustration as the shavings started to stick to them.

At dinner, Harry chanced a glance up at Professor Dumbledore. It was obvious he found the day's events amusing by the twinkle in his eyes. When he spotted Harry watching him, he tried to send a disapproving look, but the twitching of his lips gave him away. Harry just grinned back at him and clapped his hands. Instantly, a drum kit and several electric guitars appeared in the corner of the room. Most people didn't notice them until the end of dinner, when the tables disappeared with a wave of Ron's hand. The headmaster looked to the Boy-Who-Lived, who simply smiled back innocently and gestured to the instruments, which instantly came to life. The students and most of the teachers were confused until Dumbledore stood up to address them.

"It seems, everyone, that our resident pranksters have organised a party for us to celebrate April Fool's Day. Although I didn't know about this, I can't see the harm. Have fun!"

Dumbledore waved his hands a few times and simple decorations filled the Hall. With some help from the time travellers, even

Hermione, the Hall was soon looking wonderful. Although the students were a little wary at first, they soon got into the spirit of things, and started to dance. Harry looked around the Hall in satisfaction. It had been his idea to surprise the school like this, and he was glad he did now. Although there had been few Death Eater attacks, the young witches and wizards deserved some fun. The Days of Darkness were upon them, and any relief from the terror was welcome.

\*~\*~\*

The following Saturday found Harry and Sev heading to Hogsmeade via the Honeydukes passage. As soon as Harry felt they had passed the anti-apparition wards, he signaled his friend and the pair apparated to Diagon Alley. After a quick trip to Gringotts to get some money out of the Order vault, the pair headed back out into the bright sunshine. Sev had been hesitant at first to leave the vicinity of Hogwarts, as he didn't like so obviously flaunting the school rules. He didn't mind breaking them in emergencies, or bending them a little, but to leave the campus and travel to London without permission was an expellable offence. Harry assured him that Dumbledore would never expel either of them, and that he could protect the younger boy if the need arose, but Sev wasn't convinced. This time, though, he got a little concerned when Harry started to head for the Dark Wizard district. The other times they had come, they had remained strictly in Diagon Alley, the Leaky Cauldron, and slightly into Muggle London. The latter had been a revelation to Sev, who had never had the chance to interact with Muggles before.

"Harry, where are you going?" he asked as he rushed to catch up.

"Knockturn Alley."

"But that's for Dark Wizards!"

Harry simply raised his eyebrow at his companion before continuing on. It suddenly occurred to Sev that his friend had been deadly serious when he said he was a Dark Wizard. Of course, he had seen him do a little Dark Magic before, but this was the one thing that confirmed it in Sev's mind. There was a big difference between knowing something and believing it. He now knew without a shadow

of a doubt that Harry belonged in that place. He easily navigated his way through the hags and assorted dregs of society gathered in the Dark District. Of course, Sev had been there several times with his father, but never without an accompanying grown up. To see Harry so at home there was a bit shocking.

When he finally caught up with the sixth year, Harry was just entering a tattoo parlour. The younger Slytherin knew the older boy had a tattoo, but he never thought he'd be getting a new one.

“What are we doing here, Harry?”

“I want a tattoo.”

“You have a tattoo.”

“I know, but I need to add something to it.”

“Why don't you just create one like the Order tattoos?”

“They're not the same. They aren't permanent, and don't move around. Have you ever looked at any of the Order tattoos?”

“I've seen your friends'. Ron has a thestral on his back, Ginny has a phoenix on her ankle, and Hermione has a unicorn on her shoulder.”

“Yes, those are their Order marks. Have you ever seen them move?”

“No...”

“And do they look like life?”

“Not really.”

“Well, there you go. I want something permanent.”

“Sure. If that's what you want. How long will it take?”

“About an hour, I'd think. It's not going to be as big as the other one.”

“ What are you getting done?”

“ Well, you’ll just have to wait and see.”

Harry walked into the side room with a smirk in Sev’s direction. When he came out fifty minutes later, he was beaming.

“ I feel better for that.”

“ Why?”

“ You wouldn’t understand.”

“ What did you get?”

In response, Harry lifted up his shirt and showed Sev his scarred back. Beneath the ouroboros encircled raven was a roaring Gryffindor lion.

\*~\*~\*

Three hours later the two Slytherins were just finishing off their ice creams at Florean Fortescue’s when people further down the street started screaming. Leaping to his feet, Harry shrank all of the pair’s purchases and shoved them in his robe pocket before taking off down the street to investigate, Sev hot on his heels. What he saw made his blood run cold. About fifty Death Eaters, backed up by a dozen Dementors and the Dark Lord himself, were attacking witches and wizards left, right, and centre. When he felt the other boy come up beside him, Harry dragged him into a shadowed doorway and turned the horrified Sev towards him.

“ Sev, look at me.”

“ Harry! Attack! What do we do?!”

“ Calm down and listen, Sev. I need you to concentrate. I’m going to go and fight them. I need you to erect an anti-disapparation ward around the whole Alley. Remember, only an anti-*disapparation* ward. People still have to be able to apparate in, just not out. Then I need you to herd everyone out of the way and put a shield around

them. After that, conjure a Patronus and see if anyone in the crowd can do the same. Try and get the children into the shops and ward them against blowing up or collapsing. Can you do that for me?"

"What are you going to do?"

"Don't worry about me. I'll be keeping them back, and calling for reinforcements. Make sure no-one tries to play the hero. They'll probably end up getting themselves killed. Do you understand?"

"I'll do what you ask, Harry."

"Thanks."

As Harry started to head into the mass of black cloaks, he turned one last time as he heard his name. Sev had a worried look on his face, but Harry could see determination shining in his eyes.

"Good Luck."

\*~\*~\*

Dumbledore was startled out of his afternoon snooze by a frantic calling in his head.

~Calling all Order members. Calling all Order members. Diagon Alley is under attack. I repeat, Diagon Alley is under attack. All able fighters needed immediately. About fifty Death Eaters, a dozen Dementors and the Great Bastard himself present. No civilian casualties as yet, but I can't hold them off forever. They're...~

The connection was broken off suddenly, making Dumbledore start a little. When Harry normally broke mental connections, it was a gentle process. This felt as if the link had been ripped apart, which wasn't a good sign. Dumbledore tried not to dwell on why Harry was at Diagon Alley as he created a door in his office wall and prepared to head for Domus Corvus Corax to apparate out. In Harry's room, he met up with Filius, Minerva, Alastor and the other three time travellers.

"Albus! What's going on?"

“ I don’t know, Alastor. I know as much as you. It sounds urgent, though.”

“ Harry wouldn’t call like that if it wasn’t,” Ginny added.

“ I agree. I just hope we’re in time....”

\*~\*~\*

As soon as he started to attack the Death Eaters, Harry began to call the Order for help. He knew they would realise this wasn’t a prank, and would come as soon as they could. He would just have to hold the enemy off until backup arrived. Looking up, he noticed Sev was doing as he was asked, and most of the onlookers were getting out of harm’s way. Concentrating on the task at hand, he sent spells flying in all directions, cutting through the ranks of Death Eaters. However, their numbers were overwhelming, and soon he was in the middle of a sea of black. His mental message was cut off suddenly when he was stabbed in the shoulder with a wicked looking blade. With a cry of pain, he fell to the floor in agony, but was lucky enough to be able to pull the dagger from his flesh before he was overwhelmed by the Death Eaters. Stopping his attack, he took a few precious seconds to erect a powerful shield around himself while he regained his breath. It was strong enough to hold for several minutes and keep out all but the worst of spells. Harry could feel himself being hit with several Unforgivable curses, but he was protected by his immunity necklace. As soon as he regained his senses, and felt his shoulder begin to heal, he leapt to his feet and started once more on the offensive.

After a few more minutes, Harry was vaguely aware of more people joining the fight. When he saw a familiar Patronus gallop by he looked around and saw Hermione and Ginny fighting nearby. Across the battlefield, he saw Ron staring at Sev’s Patronus, mystified. Harry had forgotten that his friend’s Patronus took his own animagus form. The red headed Gryffindor had been thrown a little at seeing a silvery winged leopard sprinting towards a group of Dementors. After a few more minutes, it became apparent that the Order was starting to win, but it was close. As anticipated, Dumbledore was on the other side of the battlefield, fighting

Voldemort. Harry strengthened his shield before doing what he did best. Within seconds, the Dark Lord was clutching his arm in pain, and Dumbledore gained the upper hand. This time when Harry was attacked from behind, he was ready for it. He still agonised over the result of the last time he was in this position. He wasn't going to be caught out again. When the sword came swinging towards the back of his head, he pivoted around and hefted his own sword. The Death Eater was obviously surprised, but soon regained his cool. The pair started fighting viciously, Harry all the time trying to send pain through Voldemort's Dark Mark. Eventually, the other man made a mistake, and Harry sank his sword into his belly. The Boy-Who-Lived stared in horror as the Dark Wizard fell to the ground, clutching the bleeding wound. The man soon lost consciousness from blood loss, and when he saw the body go limp, Harry sprang into action. Kneeling down, he held his hands over the wound and started chanting an elven healing spell. The wound closed up slightly, leaving the fallen man in a critical but not fatal condition. As soon as Harry's energy ran out, he collapsed to the floor in exhaustion, seeing Ron running in his direction before he passed out.

\*~\*~\*

When Harry came to he was in the hospital wing at Domus Corvus Corax. Sitting at his bedside was a weary looking Albus Dumbledore, who seemed to sit up straighter when Harry looked his way. The boy figured he had been waiting for him to wake up so he could question him about the battle. Wanting to be the one who opened the conversation, Harry asked the obvious question.

“ What happened?”

“ That's what I would like to know, Harry.”

“ I asked first.”

“ That you did, my boy, that you did. All I know is that you disturbed me in my office by calling for help, claiming that Diagon Alley was being attacked. I joined the fight with some of the Order members, losing sight of you quickly. The next I saw you, young Ronald was leaning over you and you had lost consciousness. The Death Eaters



were fought back and Voldemort retreated. Now, I want you to tell me what happened.”

Harry let out a sigh before telling his story. He confessed to the unauthorised trips to London, his teaching Sev to apparate and using the excursions as practice, and what happened when the Death Eaters turned up. Once he had finished, he sat in silence waiting for the elderly headmaster to pass judgment. After a tense couple of minutes, Dumbledore put Harry out of his misery.

“ First, Harry I want you to know how disappointed I am in you. You deliberately broke one of our most prominent school rules over and over. Not only that, but you encouraged a younger Housemate to join you on these jaunts. That was very irresponsible of you. I would also like to say that despite your gross disobedience, I will not be expelling either you or Mr. Snape. This is only because you have redeemed yourselves by saving the lives of over two hundred witches and wizards who were present at the attack. If you had not worked together to keep people from being hurt, and taken on so many of the enemy single handedly, we could have been facing a massacre. I would like to know, though, why you healed the Death Eater you collapsed on.”

Harry blanched when he remembered the man he had impaled on his sword.

“ I’m sorry, Sir. I couldn’t let him die. I knew as soon as I wounded him that he could die, and I couldn’t let it happen. I’ve never killed anybody, despite the number of battles I’ve been in. I always make sure I stupefy or incapacitate the enemy, and never kill them. It’s something I won’t let myself do. I may be classed as a Dark Wizard, but I will never be evil. If I ever take a life, it will lower me to Voldemort’s level, and I will never do that. Even if I have to die in the process.”

“ Noble words, Harry, but you have to understand that these people don’t deserve your sympathy. On the battle field, it is sometimes kill or be killed. They are evil people, and the world has to be saved from them.”

“ Evil acts carried out in the name of good are no less evil. I will never become a murderer. I’m sorry.”

“ For now I will respect your decision, but I implore you to reconsider.”

“ Professor, you said that Death Eaters were evil and deserved to die. How is you judging them like that any different from Voldemort judging Muggles worthy to die? Tom Riddle was abused by Muggles in his childhood. They hurt him, and he judged them for it. He hurts them, and you judge him for it. But who judges you? Where does the line between good and evil blur?”

“ A valid point, Harry, and one I will not pursue at this time.”

“ Why not?”

“ Because we have a more pressing matter to discuss. And at the moment, I have no answer for you.”

“ Alright. But this isn’t over.”

“ I know. Now I want to ask your opinion on something. I believe that we need to start recruiting Order members from the student body. Fifth years and above. Do you have any ideas for how to go about it?”

“ Well, you have to be sure of their loyalties before approaching them.”

“ Yes, but how do we do that short of taking them to my office one by one and administering veritaserum?”

Harry sat deep in thought for a few minutes, thinking over his time in the past as well as in the Muggle world. After a few minutes, a grin spread across his face as he thought of the perfect solution.

“ Would it be best if they didn’t know we were testing their loyalty?”

“ Yes. That way we could root out any Death Eaters as well.”

“ Well, then I have the perfect solution.”

“ What?”

“ The Hollerith System.”

## Chapter Twenty – The Order Grows

The headmaster gave Harry a blank look.

“ What do you mean, Harry?”

Harry was a little surprised that he knew something that the headmaster didn't. He smiled back and began to explain his idea.

“ The Hollerith System is the perfect solution to the problem. You said it yourself; there is little you can do to test loyalties short of dragging everyone to your office and dosing them up on veritaserum. Even getting Fawkes to test everyone would take a long time. It's alright for Order members, as they join a few at a time, but to do the whole school would be a little over the top. I can't think of any other efficient magical way of testing, so I think we will have to fall back on an old Muggle concept. It's old enough that even the Muggle borns won't question it. In fact, very few people will have heard of it.”

“ That's all well and good, Harry, but what exactly is it? And why do you think it will work?”

“ Herman Hollerith was an American mathematician. Most of his work was done in the mid to late nineteenth century, and was centred on an idea he had for making a census more efficient. He worked with cards, which had holes punched in them to represent different information. It made it easier to count answers to questions in a census, and was very accurate. I'm not sure of the whole technical side of it, but basically it was a quick method of compiling survey information.”

“ But what does this have to do with anything?”

“ Just bear with me, there is a point to this. Anyway, before the Second World War in the early 1930s, a census was carried out in Nazi Germany, and the answers were counted using a modified version of the Hollerith Electric Tabulating System. You see, some of the questions on the census were seemingly unimportant, but by using Hollerith's machine, the Nazis were able to determine which people were Jewish and which weren't, simply by the combination of

responses they gave. The answers were punched on the cards, and by having a map of response variations, it was possible to work out everyone's ethnic origin with a very small error margin. This was later put to use during the Holocaust."

" I think I see where you're going with this," the headmaster murmured.

" What I'm getting at is that we could use the same principle. The Nazis found out who the Jews were simply by asking a series of seemingly innocent and random questions. We can do the same thing. We could come up with a form of test, probably written and multiple choice, that when tabulated will clearly show the loyalties of the students. If we do it in a sufficiently subtle way, no-one will ever know the true purpose of it. Then we'll take aside those who are suitable to join the Order and test them with Fawkes to make sure, and we keep an eye on any potential Death Eaters."

" And you're sure this will work?"

" Positive. We just say that the tests are part of an international survey of school children, or something to that effect, put everyone in the Great Hall under exam conditions, and no-one will ever know the difference."

Dumbledore sat back and thought about it carefully. What Harry was suggesting did seem to make sense, and if it was a Muggle technique, then even if the parents asked what it was about they would say it was simply a poll. People from wizarding families couldn't possibly see the ulterior motive behind it. Smiling, he grinned at a beaming Harry.

" Well, my boy, I think you have solved our problem."

\*~\*~\*

It took two weeks for Harry's plan to come into fruition. Two days after the battle he was allowed out of the hospital wing, at which time he immediately called a full Order meeting. He needed more than just the Order council in on this, as it would take as many people as possible to devise the questions to be asked on the test. They had to

be subtle enough to prevent suspicion, but also specific enough to give them an accurate picture of the students' loyalties. As soon as everyone had turned up, Harry had taken the floor and explained what his idea was. Many of the witches and wizards from old wizarding families scoffed at the idea of a Muggle invention being the answer, but most of the Muggleborns approved. Some of the older ones had even heard of it, and its success in the various instances it had been widely used. Yanika especially tried to win people over. She had been one of the people subjected to the census performed by the Nazis, and as a result had been classed as a gypsy and sent to one of the labour camps. She could see where Harry was coming from with this, and thought that while the machine itself, and the use of cards, may not be necessary, the basic principle was sound.

Eventually, after much squabbling, it was put to the vote. It was a marginal win in Harry's favour, but it was enough. Within two hours he had the Order members split into various groups based on their philosophical strengths. Some were devising the layout of the test, others were coming up with different ideas on how to count the results. Several groups of the more cunning people were devising the questions to be asked, and those, such as Dumbledore, who were experts in human nature were checking the questions decided upon. Some people were even devising methods to ensure the students gave honest answers. After all, it wouldn't do for the test subjects to give improper answers, as that would ruin the whole purpose of the test. Gaerwyn and Lolide had even turned up as well, much to Harry's delight. He even convinced them to stay for a few days after the test was compiled. It was James' birthday on the 2nd, and he hoped they would stay and surprise him.

Eventually, after two long weeks, all of the arrangements were made. Everyone had been working flat out to get it finished as soon as possible, and most of the Order members were exhausted. The questions had been harder to formulate than they had originally expected, as some of the suggestions would have given away the true purpose of the test. On the last day of work, while some of the researchers were making last minute checks and other members were copying the finished papers, Harry sidled up to where Dumbledore was sitting and dropped into the seat to his right.

“ So, do you think it’ll work?” he asked the older man.

“ I believe it will, Harry, I believe it will.”

“ I know a lot of people are skeptical about it, but I’m sure it will at least give us a good idea about the students. I mean, it doesn’t have to be a hundred percent accurate, as we will be testing potential members with Fawkes anyway. It just has to narrow down the number of candidates. And for all the wizarding world criticises them, the Muggles have some pretty good ideas. In fact, I think it would be beneficial to everyone if they took the time to see what the Muggle world has to offer.”

“ I agree, Harry. After all, it was the Muggles who invented Lemon Drops.”

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The day after the tests were finished, Dumbledore was due to announce them at breakfast. As Harry and Sev headed down to the Great Hall, they speculated on what the reactions of the students would be.

“ I reckon Malfoy’ll refuse to do it,” Harry said.

“ Yeah, I agree. He’ll be all ‘Malfoys don’t do anything that isn’t worthwhile’. He’s sure to insist he’ll tell the Ministry he’s not being treated fairly. Or call his father. It’s always ‘wait until my father hears about this’, and ‘my father will never allow it’.”

Harry couldn’t help the little giggle that escaped at Sev’s description. It was just like Lucius Malfoy to go calling for Daddy when things didn’t go his way. It was the same with Draco in his time. Any little problem and he’d be writing to Lucius as soon as possible. Harry was just glad that Caligula wouldn’t be able to influence the tests at all. Dumbledore was making them compulsory, as he knew that the children of the Death Eaters would be suspicious of anything they didn’t know the purpose of. And by the time any letters had reached the parents, the tests would be over and done with.

“ I wonder what the Marauders will say?” Harry mused.

“ Well, I bet Black pulls a prank during the test. Just to cause trouble. It’s the sort of thing he’d do. He’ll probably do something to disrupt the OWLs as well. He’s selfish like that, thinking only of his own amusement and not having any consideration for other people’s education. He’s interrupted at least one exam every year since we started. Potter’s not much better.”

“ I’m sure it’s not that bad,” Harry said, a little uncomfortable with the subject.

“ Trust me, Harry, it is. Potter and Black are the most arrogant gits I’ve ever had the misfortune to meet. They think they own the place, and I know for a fact that they could get away with murder. I don’t know how many times they’ve done something dangerous, not to themselves but to others, and got away with nothing more than a loss of a few House points and a couple of detentions.”

“ Well, we’re not exactly angels,” Harry tried to calm Sev by saying.

“ True, but at least we don’t try to hurt people. I mean, sure we sometimes prank people, but it’s always harmless fun. The Marauders don’t care if people get hurt.”

“ Well, we’re at the Great Hall now, so I think we should change the subject. Can’t have any of the other students realising we’re in on the tests,” Harry said, effectively ending the conversation.

“ I suppose.”

The pair seated themselves at the Slytherin table and started to pile food on their plates. They had strategically placed themselves near to Lucius Malfoy, intent on seeing his reaction to Dumbledore’s announcement. As they were polishing off their second plate of sausages, Dumbledore stood at the teacher’s table and clapped his hands to get everyone’s attention. Once the Hall was silent, he cleared his throat and made the announcement.

“ Everyone, I have some rather interesting news. You may all be pleased to know that lessons today have been cancelled.”



Dumbledore didn't get the chance to continue as cheers rang out loudly around the Great Hall. Gryffindors, Hufflepuffs and Slytherins alike were celebrating the lack of studying for a whole day. At the Ravenclaw table, though, loud complaints were to be heard. Ravenclaws enjoyed studying, and the news that they were to miss a whole day's worth of lessons angered them. After the noise died down a bit, the headmaster called everyone to order and continued with what he had been saying; shattering the plans three of the Houses had been making for the day.

"Now, although lessons have been cancelled, we will not be letting you have a day off. The lessons have been cancelled for a very good reason. We will be engaging in a school wide activity designed to tell us a little bit about each of you, thus allowing for better teacher-student relations. The tests are multiple choice, and should take about three hours to complete. It is a new scheme suggested to us by someone with close ties to the school, and it will be carried out every year for the foreseeable future. You have one hour to get yourselves ready, and we will all meet here in the Great Hall at ten o'clock. Thank you."

The stunned students all started chattering at once. The Ravenclaws were frantically packing up and heading to the library to study for the unexpected test. Ginny was the only one who didn't go, choosing instead to go and sit with Ron and Remus. She didn't have the heart to tell her Housemates that it wasn't the sort of test they would be able to study for. The Gryffindor and Hufflepuff tables both had mixed responses, some people complaining about having to take a test, and some simply curious about what could be on it.

The Slytherin table was another matter. Most of the students had reacted with anger, outraged that they hadn't known about it before the rest of the school. Most of the Slytherins, being purebloods, had family high up in the Ministry of Magic, and prided themselves on knowing everything of any note before people in other Houses. The fact that this was a complete surprise didn't sit well with them. As predicted, Lucius was rather vocal in his objection. Sev and Harry watched in amusement as he ranted to anyone who would listen.

“ It’s not right! Why didn’t I know about this? Wait until I tell my father! He’ll have Dumbledore out of this school before you can say ‘Quidditch’! Honestly, he’s not fit to run this school.”

“ And who do you suggest runs it, Malfoy? Your father?” Harry drawled.

“ Keep out of this, Anguifer. And as a matter of fact, I think my father would do a much better job running the school than that old crackpot.”

“ Really? I’m sure he’d have fun with it, too. Teaching the Dark Arts and how to be a perfect little Death Eater. He’d turn Hogwarts into a factory for Voldemort followers.”

“ Don’t talk about my father like that! He’s ten times the wizard you will ever be!”

“ Is that so, Lucius? Then tell me why every time I’ve ever run into dear old Caligula he’s ended up in hospital.”

“ Lies!”

“ No, I’m serious. Your father’s an incompetent fool that clings to that pathetic excuse for a Dark Lord in the hope that he can achieve the kind of power he hasn’t already managed to buy.”

Lucius stood up suddenly, his wand in his hand. Harry simply blinked, and the thin piece of wood snapped clean in half. He smirked as the bewildered Malfoy stared at his wand in disbelief.

“ I suggest you get that looked at, Lucius. Oh, and remember. In future, you’d better not cross me.”

Gesturing for Sev to follow, Harry strode out of the Great Hall, a triumphant look on his face, leaving an astonished Lucius in his wake.

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An hour later, everyone was back in the Great Hall. The House tables had been removed, and in their place were rows and rows of

different coloured desks. Each desk corresponded with a House colour. The students gathered at the back of the Hall awaiting further instructions. Soon, the teachers started to guide them to their desks, seating everyone by name, House and year. Once everyone was in place, Harry, as instructed, cast a wandless spell over the whole Hall, ensuring all of the students would answer honestly. It was a mild truth spell, not as potent as something like veritaserum, but just enough to ensure the students would be sensible with their answers. Professor McGonagall then went around handing out quills which would ensure the students wouldn't cheat. They were the same as the ones used in Hogwarts exams. Once this was done, Dumbledore moved to the front of the room.

“ Everyone, you have three hours. You must answer all of the questions, and your answers must be honest. Good luck, and have fun!”

With a clap of his hands, the papers appeared on everyone's desk. The students turned them over and looked at the first question, most frowning in confusion.

‘What is your favourite type of bubble bath?’ read the first question.

Looking at each other across the rows, they shrugged at each other and started to answer the bizarre questions. When they got to ‘If you had a pet niffler, what would you do with it?’ and ‘What would you rather play, hopscotch or tag?’ they started to giggle to themselves. The teachers repeatedly had to remind people that they were supposed to be under test conditions, and that they had to remain silent.

As anticipated, two hours into the exam, a giant ghost-like dragon burst through the Great Hall and started to circle around the enchanted ceiling. Everyone started to scream, dropping to the floor and crawling beneath their desks. Only a few remained seated, including Harry and all of the Marauders. After the ‘dragon’ had made a second pass of the Great Hall, Harry stood up and waved his hand at it. The apparition immediately dissipated, turning into a cloud of smoke. Looking over to the seated Marauders, the Boy-Who Lived could see the looks of glee on their faces turn into disappointment as

they shot Harry annoyed looks. Dumbledore broke the tension by standing and clearing his throat.

“ If everyone would please take their seats....”

The students crawled out from under their desks and sat back in their seats, taking up their quills again.

“...I would like to grant Misters Potter, Black, Lupin and Pettigrew each a detention with Mr. Filch and twenty points each from Gryffindor. That was a dangerous prank that could have easily started a mass panic. It also interrupted a very important examination. I assure you, I will be speaking to your fathers about this. I would also like to award twenty points to Mr. Anguifer for keeping his head and solving the problem for us.”

The rest of the Gryffindors shot the Marauders murderous looks. Losing eighty points in one go so close to the end of the school year had likely put them out of the running for the House cup. They would have to try and make up the extra points on the last quidditch match of the season, the one against Slytherin.

The rest of the test went smoothly, and when he'd finished, Harry looked out across the Great Hall at all of the students, wondering just which ones would be deemed worthy of being the next generation of the Order of the Phoenix.

## Chapter Twenty One – Initiation

It took three days for the results of the test to be worked out. Although it didn't take that long to calculate the results, Harry insisted they be checked several times before possible Order candidates were selected. The younger years had been dismissed out of hand, as they weren't old enough to be of any real use in a practical capacity. Their results were filed away for future reference, though, and those deemed suitable would be retested at a later date. Those in the top three years were narrowed down to fourteen possible candidates.

At breakfast the day after the results came in, the fourteen chosen ones all received owls from the headmaster. The time travellers and Sev watched as the owls circled the Great Hall and landed in front of the surprised students. The envelopes were a rich gold colour, and on the front of each was written 'URGENT – DO NOT OPEN IN THE PRESENCE OF OTHERS'. Most of the fourteen took their letters and shoved them in their bags, to open when they got to their rooms, or if they had any time alone during the day. At the Gryffindor table, though, one person was already ripping into the letter, a cluster of friends waiting eagerly to find out what was inside. Harry spotted this, and sent Dumbledore an amused look. He then nudged Sev in the ribs and discreetly pointed across the Hall. Seconds later, red smoke was billowing out of the envelope and surrounding the startled group. A loud, indiscriminate voice filled the Hall, gaining the attention of the staff and all four Houses.

“ PEOPLE WHO OPEN LETTERS AT INAPPROPRIATE TIMES DESERVE EVERYTHING THEY GET.”

When the smoke started to clear, the people affected started to scream as they caught their first looks at their scarlet stained skin.

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“ Harry, can I come?”

“ I don't think it would be wise, Sev.”

“ But I want to see who gets in...”

“ You’ll see at the next Order meeting.”

“ I can’t wait till then!”

“ Sev, patience is a virtue. Take it from someone who learned that lesson the hard way.”

“ How?”

“ You really don’t want to know.”

“ Yes I do.”

“ No you don’t.”

“ Do.”

“ Don’t.”

“ Do.”

“ Don’t! Ok, can we focus for a minute?”

Sev gave his friend a sheepish look and scuffed the toe of his boot on the floor. The pair had been sitting in Harry’s room for the last hour discussing the meeting planned for later that day. The letters sent to the potential Order members were only a preliminary invitation. The selected students were to go to Dumbledore’s office that evening where they would be offered places in the Order of the Phoenix. Those who agreed would be tested by Fawkes, and Harry would perform the final spells needed. Sev wanted to go too, as he did help with the test, and knew some of those invited, but Harry didn’t think it would be a good idea. After all, those who didn’t get in would know who the Order spy was, and Harry didn’t want there to be any chance of his friend being compromised.

“ Harry, please, I won’t get in the way...”

“ No! You can’t be seen to be a member by anyone who could potentially let it slip to a Death Eater or a Death Eater child. It would uncover you, and Shirley wouldn’t take kindly to a spy in his ranks.”

“ I know, but I could stay invisible.”

“ You haven’t perfected wandless invisibility yet!”

“ I’m almost there! And, you told me I was picking it up faster than Dumbledore did.”

“ That’s because you’re young, but if you’re not completely invisible, you could still be spotted. I don’t care *how* transparent you are.”

“ I could cast a temporary invisibility charm over myself. Like the one you used on me in the common room when you pretended to be Shirley. If it doesn’t have to make the whole of me invisible, it’ll last longer, and I can renew it if necessary.”

Harry looked at his friend for a minute and thought about the suggestion. He could see that Sev really wanted to go, and he *had* been working hard to master wandless invisibility. It was the last thing Harry had decided to teach the young Slytherin, as he had already mastered wandless magic and the animagus transformation. The weapons training would continue, as would the potions lessons, but the invisibility spell was the last big piece of magic the boy would need.

“ Alright, but you have to stay quiet. I want you in the corner of the office, out of the way, and don’t say anything no matter what happens. Understand?”

“ Yes, mother!”

“ Sev!”

“ Sorry. I’ll be good.”

Harry let out a long suffering sigh before turning and walking out.

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“ Hello everyone, I’m glad you could all make it.”

The gathered students shuffled into the office and sat in the row of seats placed in front of Dumbledore's desk. Some stood out more than others by their bright red faces, but all had something in common. They were all scared, and they were all confused. The letter hadn't said what they were being called up for, just that their attendance was 'respectfully requested'. Looking around at the others summoned didn't calm anyone down, as there were students from all four Houses, none of which seemed to have anything in common. The presence of Harry Anguifer, lurking in the shadows behind them, didn't serve to alleviate any of their fears.

"I have asked you all here for a very good reason," Dumbledore said, gaining the room's attention, "You have all been selected by a very accurate method as possible candidates to join the forces of Light in the war against Voldemort."

Nearly everyone flinched at the name, but Dumbledore had successfully gained their unwavering attention.

"Now, I know you are all young, and have your studies to concentrate on at the moment, but I believe the best time to start anything of any importance is when you are young. Sitting before me now I see fourteen of Hogwarts' best and brightest, and those most likely to do the right thing. I have asked you here today, not to frighten you, or ask you to fight in battles to the death. I have not asked you here to give your lives for a cause you may believe in, but not deem important enough to make the ultimate sacrifice. I have asked you here to choose a path for your lives. I have asked you here to help make a difference, to help the wizarding world to defeat the menace plaguing us. I ask you all to help us create a better future for our children, and our children's children. I have called you here to ask if you will join the Order of the Phoenix."

Silence.

Harry began to shift nervously as he watched for everyone's reactions. Dumbledore's carefully prepared speech seemed to have shocked the assembled crowd into silence. After a few minutes, the information they had been given seemed to be sinking in and some even started to smile. Harry knew that several of those assembled



had family members in the Order, which had helped them decide to ask them to join. Some would know a little of what was involved in joining the Order, whereas others were completely new to the idea. It was obvious from looking at them who has relations in their organisation. Harry could practically feel the excitement flowing off them. They must have been waiting for years to be asked to join, if the looks on their faces were anything to go by. Harry smiled a little and glanced towards the corner Sev was hiding in.

~Well, what do you think?~

~Well, ten are definites. Some have parents in the Order, and some are friends of those who do. The other four I'm not sure of~

~I agree. Maybe they just need a little convincing~

Harry then redirected his telepathy to the headmaster, who was sitting quietly at his desk awaiting an answer.

~Professor?~

~Yes, Harry?~

~Some of them seem a little apprehensive. Maybe you should clarify a few things~

~I agree. A couple of them look about to flee~

“ You do all realise that this is a big decision to make. I want you to take your time and not leap into a decision you may later regret. It will do neither yourselves nor the Order any good. If you need time to think about it, then by all means take it. You must all understand, though, that as students of Hogwarts, you will not be asked to fight in battles if you don't want to. As you probably already know, we have several students who openly oppose the Dark Lord and do fight Death Eaters on a semi-regular basis. This would never be asked of you. If you do join, your involvement would be kept a complete secret, and you would have little to do with combat situations. You may find you are better at strategy or research, or even medimagic. We have a place for everyone in the Order, and even the most unskilled

person can make a difference. Everyone plays their part, and no matter how small they will make a difference to the whole.”

Some of the students nodded at this, and the four who had been previously unconvinced seemed to look a little more relaxed. After a few minutes more, one of the Hufflepuffs spoke up.

“ How do we join?”

“ I will have Fawkes, my phoenix, test your loyalties. You will then be initiated. Once you have joined, you will be summoned to the next Order meeting, where you will be assigned your position.”

“ All this talk of summoning and initiation...it sounds like the Death Eaters,” a Ravenclaw pointed out.

“ I assure you it is nothing like the Death Eaters. For one, we don't torture our members. The leadership system is also more democratic. While we have one leader, we also have the Order council, who make the more important decisions. For the Dark side, if Voldemort is taken out, they lose their leader and will collapse into chaos. With us, if the leader is taken out, a new one is elected. The council would keep order. Now, I can't tell you any more unless you join, as it could prove a security risk.”

At this point, Harry felt it appropriate to join the conversation. Stepping forward, he took a seat next to Dumbledore behind his desk and smiled at the students. With a wave of his hand under the desk he cast a complicated spell on the group without them noticing.

“ As you have probably guessed, the Order of the Phoenix is a highly exclusive group. You are privileged to have been asked to join, but if you still wish to turn down the offer, then you are perfectly entitled to. What you must understand, though, is that if you turn us down, you cannot divulge anything you have learned today. To ensure this, you have been charmed into secrecy. Now, to preserve anonymity, I would like you all to write your name and decision on a piece of parchment and place them in this box,” he said, gesturing to a pile of parchment, pot of quills and box sitting on the desk, “ Those who have decided to join will come back in half an hour. Thank you.”

Standing, Harry strode out of the room, Sev hot on his heels. As soon as the gargoyle sprang back into place, he let out a loud sigh and leaned against the wall. A newly visible Sev came over and rested his hand on Harry's arm.

"What's up?"

"I thought it would be easier than that. I didn't expect them to be so suspicious."

"You did well, both you and Dumbledore. In half an hour, we'll go back and see what happened. I'm sure at least ten of them will sign up."

"I guess...."

\*~\*~\*

Half an hour later found Harry, Dumbledore and a visible Sev sitting in a row behind the headmaster's desk. A few minutes later, a hesitant knock could be heard on the large wooden door. Dumbledore smiled and cleared his throat.

"Come in!"

The door opened and fourteen students walked into the room. Once they were seated, the headmaster grinned widely at them. He noticed, though, that one Gryffindor in particular was giving his spy a rather venomous look.

"Snape!"

"Potter."

"What are you doing here, Death Eater."

Harry gave his father a disapproving look, but left Sev to deal with it. He didn't like choosing sides between his father and friend.

"I'm a member of the Order, I thought that would have been obvious."

“ Why would they let you in? Did you pay them or something?”

“ You should show more respect for the Order, Potter. I have been a member since January, and I’m a very valuable asset.”

“ I’m sure.”

“ Now, now, boys. I’ll have no fighting,” Dumbledore interrupted. Both sent him apologetic looks before glaring at each other.

“ I think we should start the initiation,” Harry said.

~Fawkes?~

~Yes Harry?~

~Could you test them, please?~

The phoenix bowed his head to his master and fluttered over to the nervous looking students. Sitting on their shoulders one by one, he let out a trill of phoenix song. When he got to Remus, he hesitated and looked over to Harry.

~Master, this one is a werewolf~

~I know~

~And you trust him?~

~With my life. If he is loyal to the Light, then let him in. We already have a few non-humans in the Order, including werewolves and vampires~

~I know Harry, but each time I like to ask the leader to make sure they can be accepted~

~Very well. Let him join~

Remus let out a sigh of relief as Fawkes let out a trill of song and moved to the Slytherin next to him. Eventually, the phoenix had made his way around the whole group and was comfortably

ensconced on his golden perch. Harry stepped forward to address the new members.

“ You have all been deemed worthy of joining our ranks by the purest creature of all. The phoenix, our organisation’s namesake. To complete your initiation, you will receive your Order marks. These are much like the Death Eaters’ Dark Marks, but do not cause pain. When you feel a tingling in your mark, you are being called to a meeting and must head straight to Domus Corvus Corax, our headquarters. You will be taken there soon. There is normally another part to your initiation, where you are placed under secrecy spells. This part was carried out earlier before you signed the papers. It will ensure that you can not speak of anything concerning the Order with any non-members. This is our insurance against spies. If we have them, they cannot report to Voldemort.”

“ Harry, what do the marks look like?” James asked his friend.

“ They can be anything you like. The connection to the Order can be attached to a birthmark, a scar, or any other blemish. If you like, you can receive an Order tattoo, a painless image on your skin, much like a regular tattoo, in the shape and place of your choice. Now, I want you to step forward one at a time, and I will make the connections.”

It took several minutes for everyone to receive their marks, James choosing a stag on his arm, and Remus choosing a howling wolf on his back. Lily predictably chose a small lily flower in the small of her back. The three Slytherins all chose snakes in various positions. Once they were all done, Harry moved over to the wall of the office and placed his hand on the cool stone.

“ I would like you all to come over here now and place your hands on the wall.”

The students gave him funny looks, but soon moved to obey. As soon as their hands touched the wall, the area surrounding it began to glow with a faint blue light. Once it was over, Harry gave the password and created the door. Most of them were surprised by this, and sent the sixth year questioning looks.

“ This is your way to our headquarters. If you are elsewhere, you can simply apparate there, but as there are anti-apparition wards around the school, this is the quickest way there.”

Pulling the door open, he ushered them into the room hidden from the rest of the school and led them to the fireplace. Once there, he took a pinch of floo powder and threw it in the fire. Stepping inside, he called out his destination clearly, so that the others could hear, and disappeared from view. A few minutes later, the rest of the group came tumbling out of the fire into the grand entrance hall of Domus Corvus Corax.

“ Welcome to Corvus Corax, otherwise known as Raven House. This is my home, and I was kind enough to let the Order use it for their headquarters. Now, if you follow Severus Snape, he will give you a tour of the castle. Have fun!”

Harry turned, and started heading back to the fireplace with Dumbledore. The pair had decided earlier that Sev would be a good person to show them around the castle. He knew the place like the back of his hand, and he enjoyed playing tour guide. The other two had also taken care of the rest of the arrangements, and thought it appropriate to give the young Slytherin something to do. As they neared the fireplace, Harry’s arm was grabbed by his father, halting him. Dumbledore took one look and smiled at his young friend, heading back to Hogwarts without him. Turning, Harry met three pairs of expectant eyes.

“ James, Remus, Lily, what can I do for you?”

“ Well, Harry, we have a question.”

“ What’s that?”

“ Why weren’t Peter and Sirius asked to join?”

## Chapter Twenty Two – Slytherin versus Gryffindor

Harry stared back at the three like a deer caught in headlights. He didn't know what to tell them, and he couldn't tell them too much without revealing things about the future. Things that, if divulged, could seriously alter time. How could he tell them that Wormtail would eventually betray them to their worst enemy? How could he tell them that everyone had assumed it was Sirius? When he thought about it, this might very well be the event that made Sirius look suspicious. After all, Remus, James and Lily were all Order members, and he wasn't. But neither was Peter. On the other hand, the fact that Peter was never asked could have been attributed to his weakness as a wizard. They were still looking at him, though, and he had to say something.

"They didn't meet our requirements."

"In what way?" Remus asked, "If I, a werewolf, could be chosen, then surely they could have been too."

"Remus, your lycanthropy was never an issue. In the Order, we don't discriminate against non-humans. We have all sorts in our ranks. Werewolves, veela, vampires like me, and even elves."

"Elves!" Lily gasped.

"Yes, elves. I asked them to join, actually. The fact that you were a werewolf wasn't even considered. We trust you, that's all that matters."

Tears welled in Remus' eyes as he realised that the Order didn't care about his condition. He was wanted for who he was, and not what he was. James smiled at his friend, and Lily gave him a hug. All too soon, though, they turned back to Harry with determined looks on their faces.

"So, you never explained why Siri and Peter aren't here," James accused.

"Look, it's not my fault," Harry defended, "I just suggested the test, I didn't write it."

“ What do you mean?” Remus asked.

“ You know the test you took earlier in the week? That was really to test the loyalties of the students. It would tell us who was a potential Death Eater, and who was a potential Order member. Anyone who didn’t fit into either of the distinct categories was disregarded. I’m not saying that they are evil, or Voldemort supporters, I’m just saying that their loyalty to the Order was not guaranteed. This included anyone who came from a Light or Dark family but did not want to choose a side, anyone wanting to remain neutral. Also, anyone who had chosen a side but would not commit exclusively to one cause. I’m not calling your friends untrustworthy. All I’m saying is that their commitment to the Order was not guaranteed, and we saw that from the tests.”

“ But the tests were a load of nonsense.” James exclaimed.

“ Have you ever heard of the Hollerith Electric Tabulating System?”

Lily’s eyes widened in recognition.

“ That’s the thing used in a census. With cards and holes.”

“ Yes, that’s right. We modified it, obviously, but the basic principal remained the same. By asking a series of seemingly random questions, we could determine everyone’s loyalty just by the combinations of answers they gave. After all, what Death Eater would admit to using rose scented bubble bath? They would obviously go for pine if they had to give an answer.”

The other three stared at him in utter disbelief. The fact that their choice in bubble bath had determined their entry into the Order was a little beyond their comprehension.

“ I still don’t get it,” James said.

“ You don’t have to understand it, just accept it,” Harry sighed, “ Trust me, we made sure the tests were foolproof. Maybe when they are older, and know better what they want to do with their lives, they will be asked to join the Order. After all, the tests will be conducted every year from now on. They may get in next year, or the year after. I



mean, you three were lucky to be asked, being so young. We usually only accept sixth and seventh years, but this time we made an exception.”

“ You’re sure we can’t tell them anything about this?” Lily asked.

“ I’m sorry, Lil, but it’s a matter of security. The spell I placed on you is unbreakable. Even I can’t reverse it. You’ll just have to learn to make excuses for when you have to come to meetings.”

“ That’s easier said than done, Harry,” James explained, “ Sirius is like a brother to me. We share everything. He won’t like me having secrets.”

“ I really am sorry. But you’ve made your choice, and I know for a fact that both your parents will be proud that you decided to join. I’ve known them both for a long time, and they are very important to me.”

“ I never realised you knew my parents that well. I knew you’d met them, but are you really such close friend?”

“ The best.”

“ Can I talk to them about this?”

“ Of course. You can discuss things about the Order with other members, just not with anyone else.”

“ Ok, I guess we’d better head back to school.”

“ Yeah,” Lily agreed, “ I have an Arithmancy paper I need to finish.”

“ And you need to get some sleep, James,” Harry said with a smirk, “ After all, Slytherin is playing Gryffindor tomorrow, and we wouldn’t want you falling off your broom now, would we.”

\*~\*~\*

The next morning, Harry woke with a start when he heard a frantic banging on his door. Looking at his clock, he saw it read ‘*way too early – go back to sleep*’ and let out a loud groan. Leaping out of bed,

he walked across the room and pulled the door open forcefully, a scowl in place and his fangs bared. Sev took a nervous step back when he saw his friend. Harry relaxed when he saw who it was, moving aside and holding the door open. As soon as Sev stepped inside, Harry slammed the door behind him.

“ What sort of time do you call this?! The sun isn’t even up!”

“ I’m sorry, Harry. I’m just nervous.”

“ We’ve already played Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw, Sev. It can’t be just jitters.”

“ It’s because we’re facing Gryffindor. You know Potter and Black have it in for me.”

“ Sev, tell me the truth. It can’t be just because we’re playing Gryffindor. Ravenclaw had as good a team as they do, and we beat them. And I’m sure James and Sirius will behave themselves. If they don’t, they’ll have me to answer to.”

Sev hung his head and let out a loud sigh. After a moment he looked up and into his friend’s eyes.

“ My father’s coming to watch,” he whispered.

Harry immediately understood. Satanus Snape would want to see his son play well and beat Slytherin’s greatest rivals. If their House lost today, Sev would suffer badly for it. A wave of determination welled up in Harry and he put a protective hand around his friend’s shoulders.

“ Then we’ll have to make sure we win. Don’t worry, Sev, I won’t let them beat us.”

“ Thanks, Harry.”

“ What are friends for? Now, it’s way too early to be getting up. If we don’t get some more sleep, we’ll be dozing off on our brooms, and that wouldn’t help Slytherin’s chances any.”

“ I guess so. Sorry for waking you.”

“ It’s alright. Go back to bed. I’ll see you at breakfast.”

Sev did as was asked of him, closing the door quietly behind him. Harry let out a big sigh before crawling back into bed. Closing his eyes, he willed sleep to come, but instead lay awake until dawn.

\*~\*~\*

Harry walked into the Great Hall the following morning dressed in his green and silver quidditch robes. Spotting a dejected looking Severus sitting at the end of the Slytherin table, he made his way over and shoved a plate of food in front of his friend’s nose. Sev recoiled at the smell and wrinkled his nose in disgust.

“ I’m not hungry,” he muttered.

“ I don’t care. You’re not going out there until you eat something. I won’t have you embarrassing yourself in front of your father by fainting in the middle of the match. You’d never live it down. Literally.”

“ I know. I just don’t think I can stomach anything right now.”

Harry looked around the Hall to make sure no-one was paying them any attention before waving his hand slightly over Sev’s head. The younger boy immediately relaxed and started to breathe more steadily. Harry smiled, glad that his calming charm worked. It would soon wear off, but at least it would give the fifth year the chance to get some breakfast in him. Sev smiled up at Harry, and reached for the plate in front of him. Halfway through his meal, he stopped dead when he saw James, clad in his scarlet and gold quidditch robes and with Sirius by his side, walking across the Hall towards them.

“ Well, I guess this is the big one,” James started, “ You do realise we are definitely going to win this one.”

“ What makes you so sure, James.”

“ Because we have the better team, Harry.”

“ Really? I believe we both beat Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw by a long shot. You have no proof that you are better.”

“ Of course we’re better,” Sirius claimed, “ We’re Gryffindors.”

Harry shook his head sadly. Despite his best efforts over the course of the year, he realised he would never break Sirius’ mentality that Gryffindor was by far the most superior of all the Hogwarts Houses. It was something about his godfather that would never change.

“ We’ll see about that, Sirius. We’ll see about that.”

Just then, the doors of the Great Hall burst open and three figures strode in. One stood slightly to one side, a scowl on his face and his arms crossed. He glared at the gawping students and stood up straighter, trying to make himself look as intimidating as possible. The other two were tall, elegant women, with warm smiles and caring eyes. James and Harry immediately brightened when they saw the pair, while Sev shrank back at the appearance of the man.

“ Gaerwyn! Lolide!” Harry shouted, running over to meet his friends. James was not far behind him.

“ Aunt Lolide! Grandma!”

Most of the students gave James enquiring looks when he called the young woman ‘grandma’. She didn’t look old enough to be his mother, let alone his grandmother. James ignored the whispering and embraced the two women, Harry copying his actions straight afterwards. Gaerwyn and Lolide beamed at the two boys, the younger sister giving the sixth year an extra long squeeze. She had missed Harry a great deal, and was pleased to see him again. Although she had been around during the creation of the tests, neither she nor her sister had found much time to spend with him.

“ It’s so wonderful to see you both again! We heard you were playing each other in a quidditch match, and thought it would be a once in a lifetime opportunity for us, so we decided to come.”

“ We wouldn’t miss it for the world,” Lolide agreed.

Both boys grinned at the two elves. After a few more minutes of chatter, Dumbledore stood up to address everyone.

“ Well, it seems we have some guests with us today, no doubt to watch our last quidditch match of the season. If you would all like to make your way down to the stadium, we can get the match underway.”

Harry gave Gaerwyn and Lolide a last squeeze before heading back to the Slytherin table to gather Sev before the pair headed down to the quidditch pitch. As soon as they reached the changing rooms, Harry walked off a little from the others and pulled out a jar of a clear potion from his pocket. Taking off the lid, he dipped his hand in and started spreading it liberally on his exposed skin. The potion was one of his own concoctions, and allowed him to play quidditch in the strong sunlight without his skin burning too badly. He had to reapply it regularly, but it did the trick. After the Slytherin captain gave the standard speech to the rest of the team, they prepared to walk out onto the pitch. Harry was the last in the line, and before he walked out of the door, he felt the soft echo of a touch on his arm. Looking down, he saw Gallatea's transparent hand resting there. Looking up into her eyes, he gave her a brilliant smile. She grinned back at him and nodded towards the door.

“ Knock ‘em dead.”

“ I intend to,” he retorted.

With one last look at his love, he walked out into the April sunlight and squinted across the pitch to where his fellow teammates were waiting. Mounting his broom, he kicked off from the ground and made a couple of laps of the pitch before settling into his position. He listened as Sirius, the current commentator, announced him.

“ And last we have Harry Anguifer, the Slytherin Seeker. Better late than never, I suppose. And our referee for the match will be the lovely Minh Potter, our very own Mediwitch, and Gryffindor Chaser James Potter's mother. Hopefully this will give Gryffindor the win they deserve...”

“ BLACK!”

“ Sorry Professor McGonagall.”

“ You will be, Black.”

“ Erm...yes, anyway, the balls are released and the game begins!”

Harry flew high above the stadium, eyes peeled for the elusive snitch. He knew Sev would be getting nervous by now, and he wanted to end the game as soon as possible. The Gryffindor team was good, but fortunately for Harry their Seeker was their weakest link. If Harry could see the snitch soon, he could avoid the Gryffindor Chasers getting too many goals. He knew from previous matches that his father was a superb Chaser, and with the state Sev was in at the moment, the game could easily go in Gryffindor's favour.

“ And Potter moves down the field, with Snape hot on his heels. Not that the slimy git has a chance...”

“ BLACK, I'M WARNING YOU!”

“ Sorry, Professor. Anyway, Potter takes the shot and GRYFFINDOR SCORE! TEN POINTS TO GRYFFINDOR.”

Harry circled the field, keeping his eyes peeled for a glint of gold. Flying past the teachers' box, he saw the sour face of Satanus Snape riveted on his son with clear disappointment in his eyes. Next to him the two elves looked at James in a way completely opposite to the Death Eater. They looked proud. Swerving to avoid a bludger, Harry started to have an idea. Flying a little bit lower, he managed to get a bludger on his tail. It followed him as he made a bee line for the teachers' box and Satanus Snape. The man didn't notice the Seeker speeding towards him until it was too late. Harry swerved up at the last minute, and the heavy black ball carried on, smashing into the startled Snape.

“ And Harry Anguifer takes out one of our *distinguished* guests in a daring move. GO HARRY!”

“ BLACK! FOR MERLIN'S SAKE!”

“ Sorry. And in the aftermath of that wonderful piece of strategy by Anguifer, Snape Junior takes the quaffle...and...and...TEN POINTS TO SLYTHERIN!”

Harry beamed at Sev as he flew past, and the younger boy sent him a grateful look. Without the disapproving gaze of his father bearing down on him, the boy would now be able to play much better. With a quick twirl in the air, he snatched the quaffle again and sped back towards the Gryffindor goal hoops. Ten minutes later, Slytherin were tied with Gryffindor, and the match was heating up. Both sides were using dirty tricks to gain an advantage, and Harry was shocked when he saw his father trying to kick Sev from his broom. Flying at them from above, he knocked James out of the way, sending the Gryffindor spinning off at an angle. It took him a few minutes to regain control of his broom, which was enough time for Slytherin to score another two goals. Looking around him, Harry could see that the match was getting rather violent, and decided it was time to end it. Circling a couple of times, he looked hard for the glint that could end the game for him. Eventually, he spotted it right above the Gryffindor Seeker's head. He had a flashback of his second year at Hogwarts, when the same thing had happened with Malfoy. Heading straight for the other player, the Gryffindor Seeker swerved at the last minute as Harry sped overhead. Flying over to the teachers' box, he held the fluttering golden ball high in the air and let out a cry of joy.

“ And Anguifer gets the snitch,” Sirius said in a dejected tone, “ Slytherin win 210 – 80.”

Harry looked over to the rest of the team, who were flying over to congratulate him. As they landed and walked into the teachers' box to collect the quidditch cup, Harry spotted Gaerwyn and Lolide standing at the edge of the crowd, clapping hard and with proud grins on their faces. Harry smiled back and turned to Sev, who was standing next to him in a daze. He gave his friend a nudge to gain his attention and beamed at him.

“ We did it, Sev. We beat Gryffindor.”

“ I know, Harry. I can't believe it!”

“ I know. But we've done it! We've won the quidditch cup!”

### Chapter Twenty Three – Severus Snoop

Severus had a distinct spring in his step as the Slytherin quidditch team made their way back up to the castle. Harry walked next to him, sending his friend the occasional amused glance. When the group reached the main doors, Sev grabbed the older boy's arm and pulled him off to one side and waited for the rest of the team to go inside the school. When he was sure they were alone, he released his grip and turned to Harry.

“ Why did you do that to my father?”

Harry had expected something like this.

“ You were distracted by his presence. I had to do something or we could have lost the game.”

“ True, but did you have to put him in the hospital wing?”

“ Yes! What else *could* I have done?”

“ Hexed him, maybe.”

“ I couldn't use a spell. That would have made it obviously deliberate. At least this way, I can claim I was simply trying to out maneuver a bludger, and he happened to be in the way.”

“ You're incorrigible!”

“ I know!”

“ But Harry, surely you could have thought of a less painful way...”

“ Sev, do you like your father?”

“ No...”

“ What did he do to you at Christmas?”

Sev just hung his head.



“ You see,” Harry continued, “ You don’t even like him. In fact, I know that you hate him with a vengeance. So why are you defending him?”

“ Because he’s my father, and if he ever suspects you did it on purpose to help me, then I’ll be the one that suffers for it. And don’t tell me it was all for my benefit. Surely your intense dislike for him comes into it somewhere.”

Harry gave Sev a sheepish grin.

“ Well, that may be part of the reason.”

“ Uhuh, I thought so.”

“ But I couldn’t help it! He’s such a dislikeable fellow!”

Sev just gave his friend a knowing smile and strode back into the school.

\*~\*~\*

Down in the Slytherin common room that night, an intense party took place. It was nothing like the Gryffindor parties Harry had experienced, even the ones organised by the Weasley twins. To say it was wild was an understatement. The lights had been dimmed considerably, making the already gloomy dungeon common room seem more than a little forbidding. The music was dark and erotic, nothing like what Harry had been expecting. If anything, the Boy-Who Lived thought the pureblood Slytherins would play opera or chamber music, but never something so risqué. He watched the proceedings from a corner at first, entranced by the forms gyrating on the dance floor. However, he soon got into the spirit of things and found himself dancing suggestively with the future Bellatrix Lestrange, something he thought he would never find himself doing. The beat of the music pulsed in his head and he felt himself letting go slightly of his inhibitions and enjoying himself.

It was several hours later when Harry met up with Sev at the drinks table. Grabbing a small bottle of Ogden’s Firewhiskey, he sidled up

to where his friend was chatting up Angelica Nott and rested his hand on the younger boy's shoulder.

" Having fun, Sev?"

" Sure am," he slurred, holding up a bottle of ale, " How 'bout you?"

" Never better. This wasn't anything like I was expecting from a group of Slytherins..."

" Why? This suits us, don't you think?"

" Well....yes, but it wasn't what I was expecting. I thought purebloods would be more....stodgy."

" Stodgy?"

" Yeah, you know? Like the British royal family. All crumpets and arias."

Sev gave him a queer look before turning back to the neglected girl and restarting his conversation with her. Harry let out a big sigh and went to find himself another dance partner. On his way around the room, he was disturbed to see Lucius Malfoy up against the far wall with a very ugly seventh year. Upon closer inspection, Harry saw more than he ever wanted to see and quickly moved on. Finding himself a dark corner to lurk in, he surveyed the room of partying Slytherins spread out before him. As a Gryffindor, he had seen the Slytherins as dark, evil children destined to serve Voldemort and wreak havoc on the world. Now, he was older and wiser, knowing more about the nature and use of magic. He saw before him, not mini Death Eaters, but individuals who one day would make a choice to live their lives independently or join forces with the Dark Lord. Despite what the other Houses thought, the Slytherins weren't all evil. A lot of them were from Dark families, but many were also from Light families. Having learned the difference between darkness and evil, Harry appreciated that the Slytherins were severely misjudged. They were only children, after all. They had hopes and dreams like everyone else. They just had a better chance of reaching those dreams than people in other Houses. They had the ambition to achieve whatever they wanted. As he thought this, Harry realised

some of the problem the other Houses had. Many years ago, before the rivalry became tradition, the other Houses were probably jealous of the Slytherins. Their natural cunning and ambition meant they would succeed in their chosen field if it was at all possible to do so. They made their fortunes centuries ago from successful business ventures, leaving the wizarding nobility of the modern world as nearly all Slytherins. Over the years, the Slytherins succeeded where people from other Houses did not, leading to resentment and prejudice. Salazar's betrayal had started the rivalry, but Harry could now see how the problem had escalated. Seeing this room full of teenagers like all others, he could see how prejudice and discrimination had piled notoriety upon the shoulders of children. The thought brought a new clarity to Harry, and for the first time, despite the months he had been in the Serpent's Den, he saw the Slytherins for what they really were.

People like everybody else.

\*~\*~\*

The night of the next full moon found Harry organising his books into piles for the next morning. He had finished his homework earlier, and wanted his room tidy for when he left. He was due to meet the other animagi in twenty minutes; the only thing left to do was send Sev away. Harry hated excluding his friend like this, but it wasn't his secret to tell. Every month on the full moon, when Sev came for his nightly lessons, Harry had to come up with a different excuse for why he had to go away again. At first it seemed to work, but as Sev grew to know him better, his excuses seemed to be less effective. Sev was getting suspicious, and there was nothing Harry or anyone else could do about it. A firm knock on his door brought Harry out of his thoughts, and with a wave of his hand the lock turned, allowing the younger boy to enter. As he stood in front of the door, he gave Harry a penetrating look before coming to a conclusion.

"You're canceling the lesson again," he said in a matter of fact voice.

"Yes, I am," Harry stated.

"Why?"

“ I’m busy tonight.”

“ Doing what? Tell me, Harry, what is it you do every month?”

“ Nothing!”

“ Really? You disappear once a month for no apparent reason?”

“ No! I mean, yes! No! What do you mean, every month?”

“ Don’t think I haven’t noticed what happens. Once a month you cancel our lessons and sneak out at night. I don’t know where you go, or who with, but you are never in your bed until dawn.”

Harry was a little disconcerted that Sev had noticed so much, but something was bothering him about what the fifth year had said.

“ How do you know I’m not in my room until dawn?”

“ Because I have a spell on your room to tell me if you are in it or not. I like to know if you are here or not. If I need you for anything, I can come straight here if you are in your room, or not bother looking if you are not. On the nights you disappear, I check it every hour to see if you are back, and you are never back before dawn.”

Harry was floored. Sev, his apprentice, had a spying spell on his room, and he hadn’t noticed. Images of Mad Eye Moody yelling “ CONSTANT VIGILANCE” appeared in his mind, and he started to wonder what else he had missed. He was supposed to be on his guard 24/7, knowing he was a constant target for evil wizards. The fact that a mere fifth year had got around his defences was disturbing.

“ How did you put up the spell without me noticing?”

“ I did it during one of our lessons. You were expecting me to be casting spells in your room anyway, so I didn’t think you would notice one extra one. I was right.”

“ You shouldn’t have done that! What other spells have you put on me or my room?”

“ Nothing! I swear. But we’re getting sidetracked. I still want to know where you go.”

“ I can’t tell you, Sev. It’s not my secret to tell.”

“ What’s so special about the full moon?”

Harry was surprised by this. It was apparent that Sev was a lot more observant than anyone gave him credit for. A true Slytherin.

“ What makes you think the full moon is special?”

“ Because you disappear every full moon. It’s not just once a month, or even on the same date. It’s on the full moon.”

“ So what if it is? It’s none of your business, Sev. Not everything I do concerns you.”

“ I thought I was your friend, Harry. I thought you cared about me. Don’t shut me out. Please.”

“ I’m sorry, but as I said, it’s not my secret to tell.”

“ I will figure it out, you know.”

Harry thought back to what he had heard about his parents’ fifth year. About the incident with Severus, Remus, Sirius and the Whomping Willow. The incident where James saved Sev’s life. Harry smiled sadly at his young friend.

“ I know, Sev. I know.”

\*~\*~\*

On the thirtieth of April, Harry found himself accosted in the Charms corridor by two rather excited elves. Gaerwyn and Lolide had been staying at Domus Corvus Corax for a few weeks in anticipation of James’ sixteenth birthday. They wanted to be there, as they had missed most of his previous birthdays. He knew they lived somewhere else, but didn’t know they were elves. Minh and Eustace had explained away their youth by saying they were not fully human,

and therefore didn't age like normal people. James had accepted this, and didn't ask any more questions once he was told not to pursue the matter. Minh-Minh-Lama was not the sort of person you annoyed without dire consequences. She had a wicked temper, and James had learned from an early age not to cross her. Lolide and Gaerwyn were there for his sixteenth birthday to tell him the truth. He had been denied facts for his whole life, but the time had come when the elves thought he was old enough to know the truth. The fact that he was an Order member at such a young age reassured them that he was mature enough not to spread the word around. The elves were unknown outside of the Order. Even then, it was only the council members who knew what Lolide, Minh and Gaerwyn really were. Most people in the wizarding world, including the Dark Lord and his forces, thought that elves had become extinct hundreds of years before. No-one outside of the Order had seen them for centuries. The time travellers themselves had been shocked when they first met them in the time of the founders, thinking that they didn't live in their own time.

"Harry! Just the person we wanted to see," Gaerwyn called in the elven tongue. Harry smiled and replied in kind.

"Gaer, nice to see you again so soon. I take it you're here for James' party."

"Yes, we are. In fact, that's what we wanted to talk to you about," Lolide told him, "We were given the task of organising the party itself. We wanted you to help with it. We thought we could do a similar thing to the one we did for you. You know, the traditional elven one. Of course, we won't tell the guests what the theme is, but we thought it would be nice for James to be able to see a small sample of the world his ancestors are from."

"I think that's a great idea! What do you want me to do?"

"Well, we're going back home for some supplies, and wondered if you wanted to come."

"Gaerwyn, are you serious?"

"Of course."

“ Yes! I love visiting Falaryth. I haven’t been in ages. It’ll be nice to see everyone again.”

“ We won’t be staying long, Harry,” Lolide explained, “ Just a couple of hours. We need to pick a few things up. You can help us choose some of the decorations as well. After all, what other human knows as much about elven culture as you?”

“ None that I know of. But surely Eustace has learned things from living with Minh.”

“ Not really,” Gaerwyn told him, “ You see, when Minh chose to stay in the human world, she was effectively giving up her life as an elf. As she married Eustace and raised a child as a human, she accepted your ways and culture. Although she will always be an elf deep down, she embraced the human world completely. As a ‘human’, she didn’t share much about the elves with Eustace. He doesn’t speak our language, knows none of our magic, and is ignorant about our culture. You, on the other hand, learned so much two years ago about us that you could, in theory, integrate yourself into our society if the need arose. Much as Minh chose to live as a human, you could move to Falaryth and live as an elf.”

“ You really think that’s possible?”

“ Yes, we do.”

“ That’s good. I was thinking of retiring there.”

“ You could do that, Harry. Lolide and I would welcome you there, as would the rest of your family.”

“ That’s nice to know. So, when do we leave?”

“ Now.”

\*~\*~\*

Harry’s trip to Falaryth passed far too fast for his liking. He loved the elven city, and wished he could stay there for a few weeks. But it was not to be. They collected the materials needed for the party in a

matter of hours, and were soon heading back to the school. The setting up took quite a long time, but Harry had fun doing it. Ginny, Ron and Hermione had all agreed to help, but they had to do as they were instructed. They weren't familiar with elven birthday traditions, after all.

The day of the party finally came. Not too many people had been invited, only the time travellers, the Marauders, Lily and James' family. Peeves and Gallatea also turned up, the poltergeist setting off a few Filibuster Fireworks. The Gryffindors were awed when they saw how Harry's hidden room had been decked out. Lily loved the plant-like decorations, and Sirius and James had a childish game of hide and seek among the sweeping pieces of material. Remus and Peter found the food delightful, and were soon stuffed with pastries and a delightful fruit tart. After the opening of the presents, James stood to thank everyone for their kindness. He was delighted with the effort everyone had made. He was a little concerned when he received a beautiful carved bow and quiver of arrows from Lolide and Gaerwyn, but didn't say anything. He just thought he had batty relatives like everyone else. After the presents, Harry moved over to Lolide and spoke to her in elvish.

"Lolide, when are you going to tell him?"

"I'm not sure. We discussed it last night, and we don't know how he's going to take it. He could take it really well, or he could be upset that we didn't tell him before. We don't want to ruin his party by telling him in the middle of it."

"Well, let me make a suggestion."

"Go ahead."

"I suggest you tell him now, and get it over with. Then we can have everyone go down to the quidditch pitch to have a game. You know how James loves quidditch. If he's ok with it, then fine. If not, then a game of quidditch will cheer him up."

"What makes you think we should tell him now. We could wait until later in the day."



“ Mainly because he’s been listening to our conversation, and looks a little confused.”

Lolide’s eyes widened and she looked up at a gaping James. It seemed he had heard them speaking in the elven language, and was wondering what it was. He seemed shocked, as if he didn’t know his Slytherin friend would be able to speak to his non-human relatives in their own tongue.

“ You did that on purpose!” she accused.

“ Of course!”

“ Harry!”

“ What? You were putting it off, and I knew it would come to the evening and you still wouldn’t have told him. You just needed a little push in the right direction. Go and tell him now. I’ll talk everyone into a quidditch game.”

Lolide gave Harry an incredulous look before going over to her great nephew and pulling him to one side by his arm. She signalled for Gaerwyn and Minh to follow her before pulling the confused boy out of the room. Harry grinned after them and gathered everyone up for a game of quidditch, leading them down to the pitch. No-one noticed an almost transparent figure following them at a distance.

## Chapter Twenty Four – Lunar Lunacy

“ I want to commentate!”

“ Can I be referee?”

“ We can be Beaters.”

“ Lily and Harry will be the Seekers of course.”

“ I want to be a Chaser.”

“ What about Keepers?”

“ James will have to be a Chaser, of course.”

“ I've never been on a broom before...”

Everyone gave Lolide an incredulous look before shaking their heads and continuing with the plans. The two elves had explained to James who and what they were, and the boy had taken it very well. In fact, the idea that he was closely related to the mythical elves delighted him. When the group, who had picked up Dumbledore on the way, turned up at the quidditch pitch, James had a huge grin on his face. When Sirius asked him what was going on, he just got a happy shrug in reply. As the others were arguing about who was going to play which position and on what team, James found Harry and pulled him off to one side.

“ Hey, James, what's up?”

“ You know what's up. How could you speak to my Aunt Lolide in her own language?”

“ How do you know it was elvish?”

“ My mother told me. She was near enough to overhear the pair of you, as I was. I asked her on the way down, and she told me to speak to you.”

“ Well, it’s sort of a long story. I really don’t want to go into it right now. I tell you what, I’ll tell you a bit now, and we’ll finish this on September 1st.”

“ Why September 1st? That’s a long way off!”

“ Yes, but it would be the best time to tell you. Trust me.”

“ If you insist. What can you tell me now?”

“ Put it this way, I’ve met Gaerwyn and Lolide before. A long time ago. Didn’t you think it was strange when I greeted them as warmly as you when they first got here?”

“ I thought it was because you knew them from the Order...”

“ No, I’ve known them a long time. Two years ago, Lolide was my teacher. She taught me a lot about elves, and their ways. One of the things I learned was their language. I’ve made several trips to the elven world, where I honed my skills. That’s why I speak elvish so fluently. Not many people know this, but I’m part elf as well.”

“ Really? So you know a lot about my family.”

“ You could say that.”

“ Do you think Aunt Lolide will teach me?”

“ I’m not sure. You’ll have to ask her.”

“ If she says no, will you teach me?”

“ No.”

“ Why not?!”

“ Because the secrets of the elves aren’t mine to tell.”

“ But....”

“ No, James, that’s my final answer. If Lolide won’t teach you, ask your mother.”

“ Alright,” James sighed in resignation, “ I guess we should break up the argument before they remember they have wands.”

Harry looked over to where the rest of the party guests were standing. Most of them were engaged in a heated argument about the teams and the positions. The adults and the ghosts were off to one side, watching in amusement and the youngsters battled it out. Eventually, Dumbledore saw that they were getting nowhere and strode forward to settle the matter.

“ Everyone, if I could have your attention please. I think there is a reasonable way to settle this. James, I believe as the birthday boy, you should be captain of one of the teams. You should also choose the captain of the other team.”

“ I want to play opposite Harry, so he can captain the other team.”

“ Very well. Now, each of you choose a player and state their position on your team. That should settle the argument don't you think.”

“ Yes, Professor.”

“ Now, James why don't you start.”

James and Harry looked at the assembled players, mentally making choices about who would be best in the different positions. James then made the first choice.

“ I want Lily for my Seeker.”

“ I'll have Ron as my Keeper.”

“ Dad, you can be *my* Keeper.”

“ Ginny for Beater.”

“ Remus for a Chaser.”

“ Professor Dumbledore for my other Beater.”

“ Sirius for a Beater.”

“ ‘Mione, you can be a Chaser.’”

“ So can you, Peter.”

“ That leaves Gaerwyn for one of my Chasers.”

“ Aunt Lolide, I want you as my other Beater.”

“ So, Minh, you’re my last Chaser.”

The two teams decided, they all gathered brooms and spelled their clothes into different colours. Dumbledore strode to the centre of the pitch with the box of quidditch balls and opened it up.

“ As Peeves is commentating, that leaves Lady Ravenclaw to be our referee. As she can’t actually touch the balls, I will set them loose. I want us to have a nice, fair game, and I don’t want to see any injuries.”

The two teams rose into the air, Harry’s team made up of the time travellers, Minh, Gaerwyn and the headmaster. James’ team, at the other end of the pitch, had all of his Marauder friends, his father, and his aunt. The game started well, and soon the teams were worked up into a frenzy. The game was fast paced, and the old headmaster was surprisingly agile on a broom. Lolide, who had never flown before, did surprisingly well, showing she had a natural talent for flying.

The game finally ended several hours later by Harry, who caught the snitch to bring an end to the game. James’ team won overall, as they had scored significantly more goals. Harry saw that his side would never recover, and as they were starting to lose the light it was getting ever more difficult to see the snitch. When he spotted a shimmering ball of gold, he ended the game and the players headed back down to the pitch. As the group headed back up to the castle, the animagi hung back a bit to discuss the arrangements for the next full moon. So far, they had stayed inside the forest, but a few of them were eager to venture further away. As the group walked, Sirius turned and walked backwards so he could see the rest as he spoke to them.

“ So, are we going to explore Hogwarts next month, then?” he asked.

“ I’m not so sure,” Harry argued, “ I mean, the risk of being caught is so much greater. And if we lose control of Remus he could end up hurting any students that happen to be out of bed. You know as well as I do that we’re not the only ones who go wandering the school at night. The Astronomy Tower is always full of people. If Remus ran amok there, it could be really bad.”

“ We’ll be fine,” James reassured, “ We’ve been at this for a while now. I think we can deal with it. And if push comes to shove, you can always pounce on him, Harry.”

“ James!”

“ Sorry Remy, but it’s true. Harry’s got the best battle form, and he could easily subdue you if we lost control.”

Sirius turned forwards again to jump over the front steps before twisting back around and resuming his backwards gait. As he turned, he caught sight of a shadowy form following them. Looking more carefully, he realised it was an almost invisible Severus Snape. A malicious smirk spread across his face as he realised the Slytherin had heard everything they said.

\*~\*~\*

Two nights before the next full moon, Sev was storming through the dungeons in a rage. It was almost four weeks since he had overheard the Marauders and Harry’s friends talking about what they got up to on that very night every month. Even after all of the investigating he had done, nothing had turned up. He had several sound theories, but no hard evidence. The trouble was, he had asked Harry and had been denied an answer. If he was to follow his friend, he would soon be spotted. Harry was extra vigilant since he had learned of Sev’s spell on his room, and would notice if anyone was trying to sneak up on him. Especially on that night. He would be expecting Sev to tail him, and the young Slytherin knew this.

Unfortunately for Sev, just as he rounded a sharp corner he bumped into the last person in the world he wanted to see. Sirius Black. The Gryffindor came hurtling around the bend and slammed into the unsuspecting Slytherin, knocking them both to the floor with a bang.

“ BLACK! That hurt! Get off me, you useless lump.”

Sirius scrambled to his feet and watched amused as Sev picked up his spilled books and piled them in his arms. As the spy turned to leave, the sound of his enemy’s voice stopped him in his tracks.

“ You’ll never figure it out, you know.”

Sev froze, before turning slowly to face the smirking Gryffindor.

“ Figure what out?”

“ The secret of the full moon. You can’t tell me it hasn’t been eating you up from the inside, knowing that your best friend in the whole world has a big secret and he doesn’t trust you with it. He trusts us, and he trusts his other friends. But he doesn’t trust you.”

Severus growled at the other boy and turned to walk away.

“ I bet you’d like to know what it is. The big secret he can’t tell you. It has to be big if he doesn’t tell *you*, after all. I mean, I’m sure he tells you everything else. All of his secrets. I bet this is the only thing he keeps from you.”

Sev, enraged, whirled around and sent an angry glower at Sirius. Padfoot merely grinned when he realised he had touched a nerve.

“ I see. He has other secrets, is that it? Does he keep a lot from you? Has he even told you who he really is? Or where he’s from? Did you ever ask him where he spent the first sixteen years of his life? Has he confided any of this to you?”

“ Has he told *you*?” Sev spat.

“ Now that’s the big question, now, isn’t it. Has he told *me*? Has he told James and Remus? Has he told Peter or Lily? Is it just *you* he doesn’t trust with the information?”

“ *Has he told you any of that?*”

“ That’s for me to know and you to wonder about. But I tell you what. I’ll throw you a bone, so to say. Come to the Whomping Willow the night of the full moon. There’s a knot at its base. Push it to freeze the branches and climb through the passage by its trunk. There, you will find the answers to all of your questions.”

“ Why are you telling me this?” Severus snarled.

“ Am I not allowed to be friendly?” Sirius replied in a patronising tone.

“ Why should I believe you?”

“ I don’t know. I guess you’ll just have to trust me.”

\*~\*~\*

Trusting Sirius Black was one of the stupidest things he had ever done, Severus thought as he made his way out of the Slytherin common room two days later. Since James’ birthday party, the fifth year had perfected the invisibility spell Harry had been trying to teach him. He could now become completely invisible, and not just transparent. It made sneaking around much easier. Tonight it was a godsend as he made his way through the dungeon corridors and out of the main doors into the cool air of the May evening. He had made sure to leave in plenty of time, giving him the chance to hide at a point where he could easily see the Whomping Willow. He knew Harry would be looking out for him, and Sev knew for a fact that the older boy had a way of seeing through the invisibility spell. He didn’t know how he did it, as he was never taught that, but he knew it would be impossible to hide from Harry in plain sight.

Sev waited for what seemed like hours, but in reality was more like twenty minutes. Just as he was about to give up and go back inside, thinking Black had set him up as usual, the main doors of the school opened. Two figures made their way down the stone steps and across the grass towards the Whomping Willow. Severus could see that one was tall and lean, obviously supporting the other one. The Slytherin surmised this would be a teacher. The person looked too old to be a student, even a seventh year. The other figure was shorter, a fact made more obvious by their crouched position. This second figure was clutching its stomach, and appeared to be in



pain. As the pair reached the tree, Sev saw the teacher pick up a long stick from behind a bush and push part of the trunk with it. The Whomping Willow froze. Seconds later, the duo disappeared into a hidden hole. Sev held his breath and waited in silence for what seemed like an eternity before the older person emerged once more from the passage and made their way up to the castle alone. Intrigued, the fifth year waited for a few minutes after the doors shut before scuttling forward, searching for the dropped branch. A quick stab at the tree froze the branches, and Sev made his way to the hole in the ground, never seeing the shadowed shape quickly running across the grass towards him.

\*~\*~\*

“ Come on, we’ll be late,” Harry said as he led Ron, Hermione and Ginny up to the Astronomy Tower.

“ We’re already late, Harry,” Ron told him, “ We’ll get there when we get there. They won’t mind waiting.”

“ I’m sorry, Ron, I just have a bad feeling.”

Harry had been feeling uneasy for a few days now. A week before, Ginny had told him she felt as if something serious was coming up. Something that would shake up friendships and cause irreparable rifts. When questioned, she explained that she couldn’t tell him any more, because she didn’t know herself. Harry had taken her warning to heart, though. He knew his friend was never wrong about things like that. Ever since his conversation with Sev before the last full moon he had been on his guard. He knew the younger boy had been snooping around, which was one of the reasons the group were meeting on the Astronomy Tower. They usually assembled in Harry’s secret room before they went to meet Remus, but Harry had a feeling Sev might know they were there and try to follow. Suddenly, Harry’s contemplation was interrupted as James came hurtling around the corner, nearly knocking Hermione over.

“ Hey, James, where are you going in such a hurry?” Ron called after him.

“ Ask Sirius,” was all the reply they received.

As James disappeared around the corner, Ron helped his girlfriend up off the floor. When she had dusted herself down, she started to head up the stairs, stopping when she realised Harry wasn't following. When she looked over at him, she saw an intense look of concentration on his face.

"Harry, what's wrong?"

"James."

"Yes, he went that way," she said, pointing in the opposite direction.

"It's his fifth year. It's all of their fifth years."

"Have you only just realised that, mate? We've been here for months!"

Ginny slapped her brother across the head and watched as comprehension dawned on Harry's face.

"Sev! The Whomping Willow incident! He's been suspicious for ages, and now he's found enough out to follow Remus. That's where James was going!"

Harry made to follow, but Hermione grabbed his arm and stopped him.

"Harry, no! You can't interfere! James was the one who saved his life, something he never forgave him for. You can't change that, it could change history."

"I have to help Sev..."

"Harry, listen to me. We're going to go upstairs and talk to Sirius. We have to find out all of the facts."

"Then can we go and see if he's alright?"

"Of course. Now, come on."

Harry nodded and reluctantly followed the other three up to the top of the Astronomy Tower, where they saw Peter pacing and Sirius

hanging over the side, watching the ground in fascination. Harry became angry as he saw the glee on his godfather's face. Striding over to him, he grabbed the younger boy's arm and twisted him around, growling low in his throat and letting his incisors grow longer. Sirius looked nervously into Harry's faintly glowing green eyes.

"Wh-what's up, Harry?"

"You are going to tell me where James was going in such a hurry."

"Wh-what did he tell you?"

"To ask you. Now spill."

Sirius' eyes and voice hardened as he started to relax. He knew Harry wouldn't do anything to him, even though he seemed really angry.

"It was just a joke. He was being nosey. I thought I'd teach him a lesson."

"Who?" Harry said in a glacial tone.

"Snape. He was snooping around and I met him in a corridor. Told him that if he wanted to find out where we go every month, he should take a look under the Whomping Willow."

"WHERE A *LIVE* WEREWOLF IS WAITING FOR HIM?!"

Sirius' fear returned full force as Harry's whole body began to give off an ethereal light. The other three watched the proceedings in fascination. They had only ever seen Harry glow a couple of times before, and then it was always in battle when he was especially angry. Sirius looked fearfully at his friend and hung his head.

"It was only meant as a joke. It's not like Remus would hurt anybody."

"Sirius, in this state Remus is a *WILD ANIMAL*! You know he isn't himself! Without the presence of an animagus, he'll kill

Severus. And if Severus dies because of you, you won't live to regret it," Harry said before throwing the shaking Gryffindor to the floor and taking a running jump off the top of the Tower. Ron, Hermione and Ginny ran to the edge and watched as Harry transformed in mid air and glided towards the Whomping Willow, where two figures could be seen lying on the floor.

## Chapter Twenty Five – Reactions

Sev lay on his back and stared blankly at the rapidly darkening sky. The full moon shone brightly to his left, creating a convenient distraction. James sat off to one side, panting heavily and watching the Whomping Willow intently. Neither moved for the longest time, each lost in their own thoughts. They were only interrupted by the heavy beating of wings as a large leopard landed next to them. Both watched as Harry changed back into his human form and rushed over to them.

“ James! Severus! Are you alright?”

“ I’m fine, Harry,” James said, “ But I’m not so sure about Snape. He had a pretty big shock.”

“ Sirius told me what he did. Trust me, he won’t do something so stupid again.”

“ How do you know? I mean, Sirius just doesn’t think things through properly.”

“ James, I can’t believe you’re going to let him off lightly!”

“ Harry, calm down. Nothing bad happened. Sirius was just playing a prank.”

“ How can you defend him? Sirius may be immature, but he’s not completely stupid. He did it on purpose. Maybe he didn’t think through all of the consequences, but sending someone blindly into a place inhabited by a live werewolf is obviously dangerous. Sev could have been bitten. Or mauled. What would have happened to Sirius if Sev had been killed?”

“ He didn’t think...”

“ You’re right. He didn’t think. And if he comes near me or Sev again, he won’t be able to think for a very long time. James, do you know how long it takes to wake from a magically induced coma?”

“ No...”

“ Well, you can tell Sirius from me that any more pranks like this and he’ll find out from first hand experience.”

“ You wouldn’t....”

“ Sending a year mate to his death is something I wouldn’t do, but exacting revenge is another matter. Tell him to stay away from me and my friend.”

“ But, Harry....”

“ I don’t want to hear it, James. I’m not angry with you, just disappointed you are taking Sirius’ side. I know he’s like a brother to you, but he’s lost my trust. You asked me last month why Sirius wasn’t selected to join the Order of the Phoenix. This is a prime example. How do you think the rest of the Order would have reacted if one of their youngest members killed our one and only spy in Voldemort’s ranks? Do you think they would have been pleased? He would have been executed on the spot for treason. You may think he’s responsible enough to join such an important organisation, but as you have seen tonight, he will not be ready for a long time.”

“ I see your point. Getting our spy killed would be bad...”

“ It would be worse than bad. It would be disastrous. Imagine how many lives Sev will save over the years. If that was taken away, Sirius would be responsible for more than just Sev’s death, but the deaths of those he could have saved. Innocent people who just want to live their lives.”

“ I’ll talk to him.”

“ Good. Thank you for saving Severus, I wish I could have been here to do it myself, but things didn’t work out that way. I know Sev will resent you for this, but there’s nothing I can do to change that, and good *will* come from it in the future. For now, I think it would be best if you left.”

“ Sure Harry, if that’s what you want.”

“ Please.”

James turned and headed back to the castle, his body beginning to shake as the shock started to set in. He hadn't expected everything to work out like this. He knew Sirius was wrong to do what he did, even to a Slytherin. If the spy had been killed, it could have had really bad consequences. As he reached the main doors and pushed them open, he decided to head straight to bed. It had been an eventful evening, and he just wanted to sleep it off. He would talk to Sirius in the morning.

\*~\*~\*

Harry watched the shadowy figure of his father disappear into the school before walking towards where his friend was sprawled on the floor. Sev didn't react as Harry dropped down next to him and placed a comforting hand on his shoulder. Concerned, Harry gave the younger boy a small shake.

"Severus, are you alright?"

The fifth year turned his head towards his friend and gave him a blank look.

"I was so scared, Harry. And you weren't here to save me."

Harry let out a great sigh. He was relieved Sev was coherent enough to speak to him, but he was also worried about the empty look in the boy's eyes. Even in the future, as Harry's Potions Master, Sev had never looked so blank.

"I'm sorry, Sev. I would have come if I knew. You know I would."

"Didn't you?"

"Didn't I what?"

"Know."

"Of course not!" Harry said in shock, "What makes you think I did? I would never do anything to hurt you. You're my friend. You know that."

“ Not as good as Black.”

“ I’m not even talking to Sirius at the moment. I told him straight, if he ever does anything to hurt you again, he will regret it. Whatever gave you the impression that I was better friends with him than with you?”

“ He told me you were close. That you weren’t even my friend.”

“ I don’t believe he said that. Were those his exact words?”

“ No...”

“ Well then.”

“ But he implied that you are closer to him and his Gryffindors than to me. I know you are friends with them, but I hate that you have secrets from me that you don’t have from them. Like where you are from, or where you learned all that you know. Black implied that you share things like that with them. But you’ve never told me. Never.”

“ Sev, I haven’t told anyone those things. Only Dumbledore and some of the Order members. Not the Marauders. It’s something that could have major consequences if it ever gets out, and I can’t let that happen. The information cannot be given lightly. As for Remus being a werewolf, I didn’t tell you about that because it wasn’t my secret to tell. I was asked to keep it quiet, and that is what I did. I don’t break my word if I can help it. Sev, if it means that much to you, if it will make you trust me, then I will tell you what you want to know. I will tell you where I am from, and what I have done in my life.”

“ No, it’s alright Harry. Just the fact that you are prepared to tell me is enough. I don’t want to compromise anything important.”

“ That’s fine, Sev. But I assure you, one day you will know. And when you do, I hope you don’t hate me.”

“ I could never hate you, Harry.”

“ Don’t make promises you can’t keep.”



“ You did. You said you would look out for me. Instead, I find Potter is the one to save me from the werewolf.”

“ I’m sorry, Sev. As I said, if I had known, I would have prevented it. But you have to learn to take care of yourself, Sev. I won’t always be here to protect you. In fact, I won’t be here for much longer. I will do the best with the time I have, but you have to accept that things will happen, and I can’t solve everything.”

Harry felt bad for telling Severus that he didn’t know about the Whomping Willow incident. He knew about it, but couldn’t interfere. He had to let events play out as they should have, and not changed any of the details. The incident had also driven a wedge between him and Sirius that he doubted would ever be breached. Although he had vaguely known what had happened, the reality of Sirius’ maliciousness shocked him. Before he had all of the details, he thought it was an accident, but having seen it first hand, it was something he could never forgive. When he got back to his own time, he was going to have a little chat with his godfather.

The pair sat on the grass for several minutes before Harry finally stood up, dragging Sev to his feet with him. He sent a look to the Whomping Willow, behind which Remus was suffering his transformation alone. But Harry knew that the werewolf would have to do without them for one night. Sev was the main concern at the moment, and that was all that mattered.

“ Sev, let’s go back to the castle. I think we both need to get some sleep. You’ll feel better in the morning.”

“ Sure, if you like.”

Harry sent the younger boy a concerned look as he trailed behind him up to Hogwarts. Sev seemed too distant for comfort, more like the Potions Master of the future than the shy youngster Harry had grown to count on.

\*~\*~\*

The next morning Harry went down to the common room to find Severus staring blankly into the fire. The fifth year was startled out of his thoughts when Harry placed a hand on his shoulder.

“ Sev, are you coming down to breakfast?”

“ I suppose.”

“ Did you get any sleep at all last night?”

“ No.”

“ Have you been here since we got back?”

“ Didn’t see the point in going to bed. I knew I wouldn’t sleep. And at least here I feel safe.”

“ You should have told me. I would have brewed you a sleeping draught.”

“ I doubt it would work.”

“ I’ll make you a Draught of Living Death.”

“ What’s that?”

“ A potion.”

“ I gathered that,” Sev said with a frown.

“ It’s the strongest known sleeping potion. Very potent. You only use it in emergencies.”

“ What’s in it?”

Harry smiled, thinking back to his first ever potions lesson.

“ Well, Asphodel and Wormwood play a large part.”

“ Oh. I’ll have to remember that.”

“ You will.”

“ Are we going down to breakfast, then?”

“ Sure,” Harry said, pulling Sev up and heading for the door.

\*~\*~\*

The Great Hall was packed as usual as the pair headed to the Slytherin table. Across the Hall, Harry got his eye on the Marauders huddled in a group at the bottom end of the Gryffindor table. They looked up as the two Slytherins entered, and Harry sent a vicious glare in Sirius' direction. The boy's eyes widened and he looked down at the table. Harry looked at the others sitting on either side of him. James looked between to two in despair, Peter looked indifferent, Lily looked furious and was glaring daggers at Sirius, and Remus looked simply devastated. Sev saw his friend had slowed and followed his gaze. As soon as he saw Remus he started to shake slightly. Luckily, Harry noticed quickly and steered him to the opposite end of the Great Hall, seating them with their backs to the Gryffindor table.

“ You ok, Sev?”

“ Yeah. He looks so harmless like that. You would never guess what he was.”

“ He *is* harmless like this. You may not know it, but this is killing Remus. All of his life he has been so careful not to hurt anybody, and now this happens because a friend he trusted with his secret abused that trust. He feels awful, believe me. What you have to understand, Sev, is that it wasn't his fault. When he's in wolf form, he has no control of his body. You shouldn't blame him for something that he had no control over. If you want to blame anyone, blame Sirius.”

“ I do, I really do, but I can't help but resent Potter as well. I mean, we hate each other, and always have, and now he has something to hold over my head for the rest of my life.”

“ It won't be that long,” Harry muttered.

“ What?”

“ Nothing,” he said, “ Anyway, at least you are alive. And I know this means you owe James a life debt, but at least you know he cares. He may not like you, but he was willing to risk his own life to save yours anyway. And he has asked for nothing in return. Remember that.”

“ I just don’t like owing him anything.”

“ Why do you hate James so much, anyway? And Remus. You’ve never liked them, and I was wondering what started it all.”

“ We’ve been enemies for as far back as I can remember. The Potters and Snapes have always opposed each other. For as far back as the family can be traced, the Potters have been Light wizards. The Snapes, on the other hand, have always been Dark.”

“ But I thought I told you Light and Dark was irrelevant.”

“ You did, you showed me that it was the intent that was evil, not the magic. But the Potters don’t understand that. Every Potter that has ever lived has been a devout Light wizard. They have never strayed, and for a Potter to use Dark magic of any form would be unheard of. In my family, everyone has been Dark. Not necessarily evil, like my father, but all Dark. That’s why we were destined never to get on.”

“ Sev, if you ever met a Dark Potter, would you give them a chance?”

“ That would never happen.”

“ But if it did...”

“ *If* I ever met a Dark Potter, one without the prejudices the rest of the family hold, I would give them the benefit of the doubt.”

“ Good. That’s all I wanted to hear.”

“ Why do you ask? Is there something I don’t know?”

“ There are a lot of things you don’t know, but most of them you are not ready to learn.”

“ If you say so.”

“ I do. Now, you told me why you don’t get on with James, but what about the others.”

“ Well, I’m not allowed to talk to Lily Evans, because my father would never approve of me fraternising with a muggleborn. As for Pettigrew, he’s a moron. Not worth my time. Lupin is a friend of Potter’s, so we dislike each other by default. And Black is another matter. You see, half of Black’s family is Dark, and half is Light. Sirius Black is on the Light side, and wants everyone to know it. He’s always claimed to be a Light wizard, and if he was friendly towards me, that would mean he was openly accepting of Dark wizards. He wants to avoid that if at all possible. The thing is, for someone who claims to be good and Light, he certainly pulls some rather dark pranks. I think murder of a classmate could qualify as evil.”

“ I see your point. He’s lost my trust, and I doubt he will ever regain it. It’s too late for that. I never thought he could be so malicious.”

Their quiet conversation was interrupted by polite coughing behind them. Harry turned and came face to face with the object of their conversation.

“ Can I speak to you, Harry?”

“ I have nothing to say to you, Sirius.”

“ Please. I have some things to say.”

“ Go ahead.”

Sirius glanced at the surrounding Slytherins, who were all listening to the exchange in interest.

“ Can we go somewhere more private?”

“ No. I think this is something the rest of my House should hear.”

“ Harry...”

“ No. If you have something to say, you can say it here.”

Sirius glanced at the expectant faces. Lucius was looking especially attentive.

“ I came to apologise to you, Harry.”

“ What are you apologising to me for? It's Sev you should be saying sorry to. After all, it was him you tried to kill.”

The nearby Slytherins all let out gasps, and started passing the message down the table. Soon, a quarter of the Hall was speculating on what had happened. Word soon passed to the Hufflepuff table, and then the Ravenclaw table. Minutes later, the Gryffindors had joined the discussion. The teachers had also heard and were listening out for Sirius and Harry to continue.

“ I didn't try to kill him...”

“ Sending into a situation where he was facing a wild animal with no defence is not the sort of thing that is harmless. He could very easily have been killed, and that would have made you a murderer.”

“ I'm not a murderer!”

“ But you could have been. Easily. Which would have made you no better than a Death Eater.”

Some of the older Slytherins sent Harry poisonous looks, but were too interested in the conversation to interrupt. Sirius was staring at the green eyed boy in horror, slowly shaking his head.

“ I am *not* a Death Eater.”

“ No? They kill without thought. You almost did the same. Tell me, what is the difference?”

Luckily, Dumbledore took the opportunity to interrupt them. Walking over he held up his hands.

“ Boys, I believe we should take this up to my office.”

Harry, Severus and Sirius all nodded, and reluctantly followed the headmaster out of the Great Hall, leaving loud whispering in their wake.

\*~\*~\*

“ What happened?” Dumbledore asked as the four took their seats in the headmaster’s office.

“ Black tried to kill me,” Sev announced. Dumbledore raised one eyebrow and looked to a squirming Sirius.

“ Would you care to explain, Mr. Black?”

Sirius hung his head and glanced to Harry for support. He was disappointed, though, when his eyes met the cool gaze of the other boy. He would be getting no help from Harry.

“ It was meant as a prank, Sir,” he started, “ Snape had been snooping around where he shouldn’t have, and I thought I’d teach him a lesson.”

“ That’s all well and good, Mr. Black, but that still doesn’t tell me what you actually did.”

“ I told him if he wanted to know what was going on, he should look under the Whomping Willow on the full moon.”

Dumbledore paled and his eyes lost their twinkle. A frown marred his wisened features as he gave Sirius a disappointed look.

“ Mr. Black, you know what resides under there on the full moon, yet you consciously sent a fellow student there undefended?”

“ Yes.”

“ You do understand that I am well within my rights to expel you.”

“ Yes, Sir,” he answered quietly.

“ I believe, as Mr. Snape was on the receiving end of such a dangerous and thoughtless prank, he should be the one who decides what your punishment should be.”

Sirius looked horrified at this suggestion, but Sev just looked thoughtful. He had wanted a way to get rid of Sirius for years, he and his group of friends. Now he finally had the chance to mete out the ultimate dishonour. Expulsion. He glanced at the gobsmacked Gryffindor. He couldn't make such a big decision on his own. He looked over to the one person he knew would give him a fair answer. As his gaze shifted to the other Slytherin, he saw Harry shake his head slightly. Getting the message, he looked back at the headmaster.

“ I don't want you to expel him.”

Dumbledore looked a little surprised, and Sirius looked shocked beyond belief. He was speechless. The boy he had almost had killed was not going to expel him.

“ And why would that be, Mr. Snape?” the headmaster asked him.

“ There are worse punishments.”

“ Are you sure?”

“ Yes. I would like you to give him a month of detentions with Filch, take enough House points that Gryffindor will be out of the running for the House Cup, and ban him from performing any pranks for the rest of the year.”

If the first two requests had horrified Sirius, the last left him gaping in astonishment.

“ I can grant you those requests,” Dumbledore said, “ It seems only fair if you are sparing him from expulsion. What shall the penalty be if he performs any more pranks this year?”

“ Expulsion.”

“ I see.”



“ Call it parole. If he breaks it, he receives a worse punishment.”

“ So be it. Sirius Black, I hereby sentence you to one month of detention with Mr. Filch, the removal of 250 points from Gryffindor, and a ban on pranks of any kind until September 1st.”

## Chapter Twenty Six – James and Lily Sitting in a Tree

“ How could you take his side?”

“ I’m not saying what he did is right, I’m just saying that I’m not going to condemn him for it. He made a mistake. Anyone could make one.”

“ A mistake? You call attempted murder a mistake? If that’s a simple mistake, I’d hate to see your interpretation of a sin. I *cannot* believe you.”

“ But Lily...”

“ *Don’t* you ‘but Lily’ *me* James Potter! We’ve been friends for five years, but now I can see I never really knew you. If you can take his side in this, then you aren’t the person I thought you were.”

“ Lily, listen to me...”

“ No, James, I’m through listening to you. This time, you are going to listen to me. I know you saved Snape, but that doesn’t redeem you. If you are supporting Sirius in this, then I’m afraid we are though.”

“ Lily, you can’t do this to me...”

“ I mean it! Harry was right to say what he did.”

“ He threatened Sirius! Said he would put him in a coma, or kill him.”

“ He was just protecting his friend.”

“ So am I!”

“ There’s a difference, James. *His* friend is innocent.”

“ Hardly!”

“ Oh, so he sent himself under the Willow, did he?”

“ No...”

“ Sirius did, so therefore *he* is the guilty party. I can’t condone it, I’m sorry.”

“ Lily, you can’t break up with me.”

“ I’m sorry James.”

“ But....”

“ No! James, you just aren’t listening. You’ve seen what this has done to Remus. He’s never hurt anyone before, and now a friend he trusted with his secret did something like this. You don’t seem to realise that Sirius didn’t just put Snape’s live on the line, he put his own and Remus’ there as well. What do you think the Ministry would have done if Remus had killed Snape? The executioner would have been straight around with his big axe before you could say ‘condemned’. Remus would have been ‘put down’. Sirius would have been sent to Azkaban for murder. Do you really think he could last five minutes with the Dementors before going mad?”

“ Lily, I know it was stupid of him. I appreciate that. But I don’t see why this should come between *us*. It has nothing to do with us.”

“ James, it has everything to do with us. Remus is my friend as well as yours. You saved Snape from him, making you a key player in the whole thing. Don’t say we are not involved. I’m sorry James, but I can’t do this anymore.”

Lily turned away from her boyfriend and left the Gryffindor common room. The pair had been up late into the night talking over the incident that James had managed to get himself entangled in. Lily, while not liking most Slytherins, hadn’t been raised in a wizarding family where House prejudices were acquired early on in life. While the Slytherins in general had proven to be rather disagreeable towards muggleborns, she still couldn’t condone trying to murder one. James, while not liking what Sirius had done, wasn’t openly opposing his actions either. That was something she just couldn’t accept. While she loved James, she still had her principals, and wasn’t about to abandon them for anything. Not even love.

\*~\*~\*

When Harry entered the Great Hall the next morning, he immediately noticed something was off. The atmosphere seemed a little different, but he couldn't quite put his finger on what had changed. Sitting in the middle of the Slytherin table with his back to the wall, he surveyed the room spread out before him. It looked the same as ever. The teachers were sat at the head table discussing whatever it was grown ups discussed. The students were carrying on their conversations, the same as at every other meal time. The level and volume were normal, and there didn't seem to be any obvious rumours flying around. The students seemed to be all present, as did the teachers. There were no obvious gaps at any of the tables. The décor was the same, the ceiling as ever showing a view of the sky outside. Letting out a sigh, Harry lowered his head to eat. As he did, he noticed Simbi poking out of his sleeve. Looking at the snake thoughtfully, he started hissing quietly in parseltongue.

\*Simbi, is it just me or is there something not right in here this morning?\*

\*Something is indeed amiss. The room doesn't smell right\*

\*Do you feel like going and finding out?\*

\*Not really, but as you are obviously sooo busy, Harry, I suppose I'd better\*

Harry shook his head and watched his snake in amusement as he made his way down from the table and on to the floor. Simbi and Nirah could always be counted upon to entertain him, even in the most dire of situations. They were also incredibly useful. One bite from either of them would be more effective in stopping a Death Eater than Azkaban even could hope to be. Shaking his head, Harry started to pile food onto his plate as Sev strode in the door, taking his place opposite the older boy.

"What's up, Harry?"

"I'm not sure," he replied, "But something's not right."

Sev looked at him in confusion before taking a quick look around the room.

“ Everything seems fine to me.”

“ Maybe. I’m sure something is amiss, but I can’t decide what. Everything looks normal, but not. It’s weird.”

Sev took another look around the room, this time more carefully, but could not see where the problem was.

“ I see what you mean. Something’s different, but everything looks the same as normal.”

“ I sent Simbi to have a look around, but I’m not sure what he’ll come up with. It might just be my imagination.”

The pair continued their meal, Sev chattering on about the imminent end of year exams, and Harry listening keenly and giving pieces of advice. After all, this was Sev’s OWLs year, and Harry had been through the exams twice before.

“ Sev, just remember not to panic. They’re not as bad as they seem, trust me. You’ll have no trouble with most of them. Charms, Transfiguration, Defence and Potions should be easy for you after all of your extra lessons. I even think you’ll do quite well in Astronomy and Herbology. Herbology especially, as you know your potions ingredients well.”

“ But what about History of Magic? I’ll never remember all of those goblin rebellions.”

“ Sev, the more you worry, the worse you’ll do. Seriously, you’ll pass them all without any trouble. You’re cleverer than you give yourself credit for.”

“ But...”

Luckily Simbi chose that moment to reappear. Nipping Harry lightly on the leg to get his attention, he started to climb back up to the table. As soon as Harry realised the small snake was there, he lifted him the rest of the way and held him up in front of him.

\*Did you find anything out?\*

\*You were right. Something has happened\*

\*What happened, Simbi?\*

\*Your parents aren't sitting together\*

Harry looked a little startled and glanced across the room. Sev, who hadn't understood the conversation, followed his gaze, which rested upon James at the Gryffindor table. He was sat next to his friends as usual, and the younger boy couldn't see why Harry was so interested in him. Looking back over at his friend, he noticed his gaze had shifted to the other end of the Gryffindor table. Once again following the direction Harry was looking in; he spotted Lily Evans sitting with some of the third years. He suddenly realised that this was unheard of. James and Lily had been friends for years before they finally got together. They hadn't sat apart at meal times since their first year. To now see them at opposite ends of the table was bizarre.

"Harry, why aren't Potter and Evans sitting together?"

"I don't know, Sev, but I intend to find out."

Before Severus could stop him, Harry had stood up and was walking across the room towards the Gryffindor table. He stopped next to Ron, and dropped into a seat. Some of the nearby Gryffindors gave him disapproving looks, but as he was seen as one of the most agreeable Slytherins ever to grace the halls of Hogwarts, he wasn't told to leave. Ron seemed a bit surprised that Harry was there, but turned to talk to his friend regardless.

"What's up, mate?"

"Why aren't my parents sitting together?" he asked in Anglo-Saxon.

"They had a big row last night," Ron responded in kind, "Lily blew up at James in the common room. She doesn't agree with James supporting Sirius after what he did to Snape."

"I can see her point, but they can't stay separated. If they're not together, it would ruin the whole time line."

“ Harry, don’t worry. We haven’t interfered, so they must get back together anyway. Lily’s just a little mad at the moment. She’ll cool off eventually.”

“ But what if she doesn’t? What if I was meant to talk her around? What if I was meant to, but don’t? What if I do and it pushes them further apart?”

“ Harry, why don’t you leave it for now? Give it, say, a month, and if they still aren’t together you can try and patch things up between them.”

“ Sure, if you think that would be best.”

“ I do. You know, you worry too much for a boy of seventeen.”

“ I don’t feel seventeen. More like seventy.”

“ I know, Harry, I know.”

\*~\*~\*

The exam period was upon the school sooner than the students would have liked. Youngsters were frantically trying to cram as much information into their brains as humanly possible before the tests started. Sev was in a frenzy, a state Harry could honestly say he had never seen him in before. The boy was panicking, and for someone who was always so cool and collected it was a rather surprising change. The young Slytherin was spending more time in the library than the Ravenclaws, and that was saying something. Harry had started off going there with him, but when Sev had started asking him things constantly, such as why olbas oil and oak root should never be mixed, or what the name of the commander of the goblins in the last rebellion was, he started to escape to the library at Domus Corvus Corax to revise. More often than not he was joined by Hermione and Ginny, who were going equally crazy, but for different reasons. Ginny wanted to get away from the unbearable Ravenclaws, who talked about lessons from dawn until dusk. Hermione wanted to get away from Hufflepuff, where she was surrounded by people who didn’t take the exams seriously.

“ It’s like being back in Gryffindor,” she said one day, “ There the people are valued for their bravery, not their brains. I remember in the early years when I was surrounded by people who wouldn’t study.”

“ Like me?” Harry asked.

“ Yes! Like you and Ron! But I must admit, Harry, since you were a Ravenclaw you have started to take your studies seriously. Something Ron still doesn’t do.”

“ Give up, Hermione, he may be your boyfriend, but you will never get him to study if he doesn’t want to. Anyway, he does well anyway, thanks to that knowledge transference. He understands the principles behind the magic we learn a lot better, so his grades have gone up. I don’t think you could ask for more.”

“ I know, Harry, but I just don’t like to see him wasting his potential.”

“ He’s already more advanced than most people, with all of the ancient magic he knows. And he had been having extra lessons in healing from Minh and Madame Pomfrey.”

“ True. He’s an amazing healer, I’ll give him that.”

The three hid in Harry’s castle as much as possible, often joined by a much subdued Remus. Even Ginny’s friendship hadn’t been able to bring him out of his glum mood. He wasn’t speaking to Sirius, and Peter wasn’t the best company, so he had decided to join their little study group. No-one minded, as they knew the extra studying took his mind off recent events.

James and Lily had also thrown themselves into their studying. Both had been deeply unhappy since their break up, but neither would admit defeat. James wouldn’t abandon his friend, and Lily wouldn’t agree with him. Both were fiercely stubborn, and there didn’t seem to be an end to the problem. Harry had been watching the whole thing unfold from a distance, getting inside information from Ron. He wanted to interfere, but his redheaded friend kept stopping him. Eventually, he had relented, and agreed to wait to speak to them until after the exams.



Eventually, the 14th June finally rolled around, bringing with it the first of the exams. Sev met Harry in his room early in the morning, shaking terribly and wringing his hands.

“ Harry, I can’t do this,” he said as the older boy opened his door to the frantic knocking.

“ Sure you can, Sev. Are you like this every year?”

“ No, it’s just because it’s the OWLs. If I don’t do well, I won’t be allowed to train as a Potions Master.”

“ Something tells me you’ll get your wish.”

“ Really?”

“ Yes. Now, come on. We need to have some breakfast before the first exam. I have Transfiguration, and you know how hard Professor McGonagall can be on Slytherins.”

Harry was just trying to distract his friend. He knew Minerva was always fair to him, even if he was a Slytherin. Order loyalty or something. Harry knew that if he didn’t take Sev’s mind off the exams, he would end up in the hospital wing. The green eyed boy was doing a good job of keeping Sev occupied until he spotted James heading over to him. Standing up, he told Sev he would be right back before moving to intercept the Gryffindor.

“ I don’t think it would be a good idea for you or any of your friends to be seen at the Slytherin table, James.”

The other boy stopped in his tracks and waited for Harry to lead him out of the Great Hall.

“ What is it you want?” he asked as the pair came to a halt in a nearby classroom. James shuffled his feet for a few seconds before explaining.

“ As you know, I found out on my birthday that I had elven blood.”

“ Yes.”

“ And you seem to know a lot about the elves. You know their ways, language and magic. You know as much as my mother, if not more, and she grew up in the elven world. She’s been teaching me about the history and customs of her people, but she won’t teach me anything else. She says the language and magics are only for her people.”

“ Sorry to be blunt, James, but what has any of this got to do with me?”

“ I was getting to that. I started thinking about it, and figured that you couldn’t have *that* much elven blood, so why did you get to learn and not me?”

“ James, I was taught for a specific reason. As you no doubt know, not many people still know that the elves exist. A thousand years ago, and even more recently than that, our two races were friends. Then something bad happened, and the elves distanced themselves from humans. Most elves don’t trust our people, and haven’t for a long time. Your family is the exception. While they do not often reveal the existence of elves, and only then to a select trusted few, they wish for our peoples to be friends again. I was chosen for this task. I was taught their culture, magic and language. I know more about the elves than any human ever has, even before the split. I will one day reunite elf and man, but to do that I have to show both races that we can trust each other. I was trusted with elven knowledge, and have proven that I can use it responsibly. One day, I will return to the elves when I have fewer responsibilities, and build some bridges. You, however you are related to them, are not trusted with such a task. You have no reason to speak their language or learn their magic.”

“ But I’m part elf! I have a right to learn!”

“ No, you don’t.”

“ I do! Harry, I would like you to teach me what my family won’t.”

“ Sorry, James, I won’t do it. The elves don’t share their knowledge lightly, and neither will I. If Minh, Lolide and Gaerwyn don’t want you

to learn it, then I won't break their trust. I keep promises I make to my friends. I am *very* loyal to my really close friends."

" So am I."

" I know, that's one of the reasons I won't teach you. You have proven in the last few weeks that you value your friends greatly, and nothing will tear you apart. My answer is no."

" But, why?"

" Nauro."

" What?"

" It's elven."

" I guessed that. What does it mean?"

" Werewolf."

## Chapter Twenty Seven – The Big Prank and the Leaving Feast

By the end of the exam period, Harry was beyond despair. Sev had turned into a nervous wreck, despite the fact that he had obviously done well in all of his exams. Remus was still miserable, even though it had been several weeks since the Whomping Willow incident. Sirius was wisely avoiding Harry, something the older boy was grateful for. He knew that if he ever met Sirius alone, they would come to blows. He had meant every word he had said to both his godfather and his father the night of the attack. He wasn't impressed with the way the Gryffindor had behaved, and their relationship at the moment was strained at best. He dreaded going back to his own time, something the other time travellers couldn't identify with. They couldn't wait to see their families again, but Harry didn't know what he would say to his godfather when he saw him again. Although he logically knew that the man who had escaped Azkaban was very different from the carefree boy he knew now, he knew that what he had with Sirius before he left would never be the same.

Perhaps the most disturbing thing was that Lily and James still weren't speaking to each other. Harry had tried a few times to interfere, but Ron had always stopped him. The green eyed boy was beyond despair. Seeing his parents fighting like this was killing him inside, and there was nothing he could do about it. Logically, he knew that he shouldn't mess with their lives, but the temptation was too great. Eventually, a week after the exams had finished, and two days before the end of term, he decided to stop listening to Ron and speak to them anyway. He only had two more full days to see his parents alive and well, and he didn't intend to waste a moment.

At breakfast the morning of the second to last day, two owls headed down to opposite ends of the Gryffindor table, each taking a note to one to Harry's parents. The boy himself watched intently from the Slytherin table as Lily and James opened their notes and read them over carefully, each sending Harry a look across the Great Hall and nodding their heads slightly. Harry smiled back, and stood to exit the Hall, heading to a deserted classroom on the Charms corridor. Walking over to one of the windows, he watched the squid progressing across the surface of the lake as he waited. It didn't take

long for Lily to knock tentatively on the door and come into the classroom.

“ Harry?”

“ Hello, Lily. How are you doing?”

“ I’m fine, Harry, but I’m a bit confused. Why did you ask me here?”

“ If you wait for a few minutes more you’ll find out. I have something very important to discuss with you, and it can’t wait.”

Just then, there was another knock on the door, and James poked his head in.

“ Harry? What’s going on?” he said, before spotting Lily sitting in one of the chairs, “ What’s Lily doing here?”

“ James, come in,” Harry said, “ We have some talking to do. All of us.”

James and Lily both gave Harry strange looks, glancing at each other in confusion. After a few moments, James reluctantly stepped inside the classroom, closing the door behind him. He jumped a little when Harry, with a simple hand gesture, bolted the door behind him with a loud bang and threw up a silencing charm.

“ Sit down, James, this could take a while. Firstly, there is something I would like to tell you. You see, I’m leaving soon, which means I won’t be coming back next year. In fact, you won’t see me again for a long time, and even then I’ll be...different. The thing is, we only have two more days together, and I don’t want to waste a minute of it. The problem is, it’s kind of difficult to spend time with both of you when you’re not speaking to each other.”

“ Why didn’t you tell us before that you were leaving? Where are you going? Why can’t we see you again? Does anyone else know about this?” Lily asked, distressed. Over the months she had known him, she had grown to appreciate Harry as a friend. He was very resourceful and brave, a perfect balance between Gryffindor and

Slytherin. Harry looked back at her, a sorrowful look on his face, and tears pooled in her eyes.

“ I didn’t tell you because I didn’t want to worry you. I’m really going to miss you, more than you will ever know, and telling you would have made the whole thing seem more real. More imminent. I wanted to put it off as long as possible. The only other person who knows that I am leaving is Sev, and he doesn’t know *when* I’m going. As for where, that’s something I can’t tell you yet. I’ll tell you on the first of September, I promise. If you come to the school early, instead of getting the Hogwarts express, I’ll tell you then. I’ll leave from here before the train gets in, and I want to see you one last time. Can you do that for me?”

Both of the fifth years nodded their heads slowly, taking in everything Harry was saying.

“ That’s good. Now, the main reason I called you both here together was to talk about your break up.”

“ Harry, that’s our business. You shouldn’t get involved,” Lily said.

“ Lily, I’m sorry, but it *is* my business. I know the whole thing is centred on the events of the last full moon. From what I have gathered from Ron, you argued about Sirius. The whole thing was about my friend, and Sirius’ stupidity. You can’t say that I’m not involved. Also, it’s in my best interests that you get back together.”

“ Why?”

“ James, I’ll answer that question on September 1st. I really don’t want to go into it just yet.”

“ Alright, if you say so, Harry.”

“ I do. Now, I want you two to sort out your differences. I have locked the door, and placed silencing charms on the room, and I am not letting you out of here until you are together again.”

“ But, Harry, you can’t force us to be together,” his mother protested.

“ I’m not forcing you to do anything you don’t want. I know for a fact that you love each other, and I have seen for myself how miserable the last few weeks have been for the both of you. I have watched you across the Great Hall, pretending that everything is alright, but in your eyes I could see that it was tearing you apart. Lily, I know you don’t agree with James’ choice to support his friend when he is obviously in the wrong. But you have to see that it shows James’ loyalty to his friends, no matter what, and not his disloyalty to right and wrong. Sirius was in the wrong, but James is giving him another chance, because he is his friend. Much like I did when I found out Sev had been given the Dark Mark. If I hadn’t, we wouldn’t have a spy in Voldemort’s ranks. Sirius is not a bad person, really, just immature and rash, making some of his decisions less than wise. I know deep down he is not a malicious person. He was acting on a childish grudge, and it had consequences he had not fully considered.”

“ But Harry, I don’t agree with what Sirius did, no matter the consequences it had. The fact that James is choosing him over me in this doesn’t sit well with me.”

“ James isn’t choosing Sirius over you. He’s doing what he thinks is right, which is exactly what you are doing. You just don’t happen to agree with each other. That’s the problem. What you have to do is realise that you are both going to have differences in opinion, everybody does, but you can’t let that tear you apart. We all disagree, it would be a boring world if we didn’t, but you have to learn to compromise. Lily, you don’t think that James is right to support Sirius, but James is showing fierce loyalty to a friend. Instead of condemning him for the reasoning behind it, you should be admiring the act itself. Not many people are so close that they would stick together through anything, and loyalty such as James is showing Sirius is admirable. Don’t condemn him for it. Show him an equal amount of loyalty and your relationship will grow stronger for it. Trust me, I know.”

James and Lily stared at the Slytherin, mouths agape. What Harry said to them made sense, but was something they had never considered before. It took a few minutes for all of the information to sink in, but when it did, the pair looked at each other, smiled, and

embraced. Harry watched in satisfaction as the two clung to each other for what seemed like an eternity. When they finally broke apart, they both had tears in their eyes.

“ I’m so sorry, James, I should have been more understanding,” Lily said in a teary voice.

“ I’m sorry too. I’ve been a prat. But you should know that I would never choose Sirius over you. Never. He may be like a brother to me, but you are the woman I love, and I never want us to be apart again.”

As the couple both leant in to kiss, a grinning Harry let down the spells on the door and quietly slipped out of the room.

\*~\*~\*

At lunch, when James and Lily came into the Great Hall hand in hand, most of the students started to cheer. The Gryffindors were being especially loud, as the atmosphere in their Tower had been frosty over the last few weeks. They were relieved that things would finally be able to get back to normal. Even some of the teachers were clapping, most obviously Dumbledore and McGonagall. They were both rather fond of the two Gryffindors, and were pleased to see them happy again.

Over at the Slytherin table, most people were glaring in the Gryffindors’ direction. Harry, though, had a huge smirk on his face. His eyes met Ron’s across the room, and he let out a little wave as his best friend sent him a pointed look. Ron didn’t look about to protest, though, as like most of the rest of the school he was pleased to see them together again. With a grin, Harry sent Ron a mental message.

~Did I do good?~

~Harry! I told you not to interfere, didn’t I?~

~Did it work?~

~Well, yes, but that’s not the point...~



~Isn't it? I thought the idea was for my parents to live happily ever after, and eventually have me~

~Yes, but I'm sure they would have gotten back together on their own~

~Really? They seemed pretty mad at each other when I spoke to them. They understand things a bit better now, though. Everything will be alright~

~It had better be, because messing with the timeline would be really bad~

~Ron, I know she's your girlfriend, but I think you've been spending too much time with Hermione. You're starting to sound like her~

~Harry!~

~It's true! Anyway, there's something I want to discuss with you, but hang on a minute. I want to bring a few more people into the conversation~

Harry closed his eyes at this point and concentrated hard. He wanted to bring a lot of people into the mental link, and it took a lot more work than having a one on one conversation. Slowly but surely, he connected the rest of the time travellers, the Marauders and Lily, but excluding Sirius and Peter, as well as Sev, Peeves, Gallatea and the Potters. When he was done, he started to tell his plan.

~Everyone, I have an idea, but I need a lot of people to pull it off. Are any of you interested in pulling one final prank? At least while we, Ron, Ginny, Hermione and I, are here. A prank to end all pranks. The ultimate prank. Anybody who is interested, meet me in my secret room after dinner tonight~

His message sent, Harry closed the link and sighed in relief. He hated having such large mind links open at once, as it took a lot of energy. Staring of into space, he thought over his plan one more time. It was perfect. He wanted something to be remembered for, and this was it. The ultimate prank. It was time to bring chaos to Hogwarts.

\*~\*~\*

Harry was pleased as the door to his room opened and people started to walk in. He was rather surprised to see Hermione walking next to Ron, and sent her a little smile. Eventually, the only ones missing were Sev and the ghosts. The latter floated through the wall several minutes later, closely followed by Sev, who had created a door from his dorm room. Once everyone was seated, or floating in 'Tea and Peeves' case, Harry started to pace back and forth in front of them.

"I have asked you all here to help me with a prank. I know you all love pranks, with the exception of Hermione, and I think if we work together on this, we can make it something truly memorable. Minh, Eustace, I know you are supposed to be responsible adults and all that, but I thought you might want to be in on this."

"I'm in," Eustace said immediately.

"Me too," Minh seconded, "You know I would never pass up the chance to cause some mischief."

"That's good. Now, I have really thought this out, and for it to work well, we are all going to have to work together. Peeves, I know you have had nearly a thousand years of pulling pranks by yourself, but I really need you for this."

"Once a Marauder, always a Marauder," Peeves claimed proudly, "I'm in. Just tell me what you want."

"The same goes for me," Gallatea said.

Harry turned to the Gryffindors, and gave them a searching look, especially James.

"Are you lot going to be able to work with Sev? I need his help for this. He's a key. Can you manage?"

"Yes," James said, the others nodding in agreement. Harry smiled in relief.

“ Thank you. Now that we have that out of the way, here's the plan. A few months ago I played this really good prank on the Slytherins...

\*~\*~\*

At the leaving feast two days later, all of the students and teachers entered the Great Hall and took their places at their tables. No-one seemed to notice that some of the students and one of the mediwitches weren't real. They were made entirely of light, but were charmed to look and act just like the real thing. It was a spell Harry had developed to cover up the absence of the pranksters from the feast, thus saving them from losing last minute House points. Before the food appeared, Dumbledore stood to give his usual speech.

“ Ladies, gentlemen, teachers, students and ghosts, we have all enjoyed another year at Hogwarts, but alas it has to come to a close, as all good things do. This year has been rather exciting for all of us, but now it is time for you all to go home and empty your heads of everything you have learned. I would like to wish the seventh years luck in their futures, and hope they make the right choices in life. I would also like to warn you all to be careful in these dark times. Lord Voldemort is powerful, and shows no mercy. If you come across him or his Death Eaters this summer, don't try and be brave. Run, if it is possible to do so. On a lighter note, congratulations to Slytherin, who have not only won the Quidditch Cup, and you surely all know, but have also beaten the other Houses in winning the House Cup. Well done Slytherin! Now, I'm sure you are all hungry, so tuck in!”

With a clap of the headmaster's hands, the food appeared on the tables and everyone started to pile it onto their plates. The chatter was loud, and everyone seemed to be having a good time until a loud knock startled everyone out of their conversations. Students and teachers alike turned their attention to the doors, which were still vibrating from the impact. As they watched, another loud thump hit them, making nearly everyone jump in surprise. The younger students and the teachers started to get a little nervous after the third time, and the older students and Order members were drawing their wands in readiness for whatever might happen. Just then, another blow hit the doors, knocking them open.

Students and teachers alike began to panic when black clad figures started to enter the Hall and spread out around the room. Most of the students screamed, though, when the last figure walked in. Tall and imposing, with black robes, alabaster skin and glowing red eyes, Lord Voldemort smirked and looked around the room at all of the terrified faces. He looked up at a concerned looking Dumbledore, catching his eye. The headmaster looked startled when the Dark Lord winked at him and smiled, a faint lightning bolt appearing on his forehead for a few seconds. The professor immediately relaxed, relief colouring his eyes. Most of the people in the Great Hall who noticed the image would never have been able to make the connection. While Harry had left his scar visible in 1943 and 1944, he thought the seventies was too close to his own time to risk it, and had concealed it. Only those who had known him in the forties would understand. Some of the older teachers lowered their wands as well, indicating to the younger ones to do likewise. This done, the headmaster relaxed and sat back to enjoy the show. If Harry was going to this much trouble, and risking being hexed by the entire Hogwarts population, it must be worth it.

As soon as the headmaster relaxed, Harry grinned widely, gesturing for the 'Death Eaters' to encircle the students and teachers fully. He then raised both arms high in the air and lowered them quickly, a signal for two figures to walk through the doors behind him. The temperature in the Great Hall dropped suddenly and people became concerned when the flowing robes of the figures fell from their heads, revealing the disfigured and rotting faces of Dementors. Harry grinned and began to address his audience.

"Hello everyone, allow me to introduce myself. I am Lord Voldemort, and will be your host for the evening. Now, I want everyone to say 'hello'."

Silence.

"Come on, you can do it. Do I have to get nasty?"

This got a response. The frightened students chorused 'hello You-Know-Who'. Harry grinned broadly, the malicious part of his nature urging him to torture them just a little.

“ I’m afraid I don’t know who. You’ll have to be more specific. One more time, please.”

No-one said anything. A frown marred the deathly pale skin of Harry’s forehead.

“ Do I have to use an Unforgivable?”

“ Hello Lord V-voldemort,” the students stuttered. Harry looked up at Dumbledore and was pleased to see amusement in the headmaster’s eyes. He was enjoying this as much as Harry was.

“ That’s much better. But I don’t think you are showing me the proper respect.”

With a gesture of Harry’s skeletal hand, the students felt themselves getting to the floor and kneeling before the tall figure. The Boy-Who-Lived grinned at this, showing off a row of brilliantly white teeth.

“ Thank you, I like you looking so compliant. Dementors!”

The two ‘Dementors’ floated forward, coming to a stop next to ‘Voldemort’.

“ I would like you to go through the crowd and choose two people at random and bring them here.”

The students recoiled at this news, each starting to back away and hide behind each other, but they soon realised they had run into the circle of masked wizards around them. They were stuck in the middle, with Death Eaters behind them and Dementors in front of them. The two floating beings reached the lines of children, pointing at people, seemingly at random, appearing to be silently discussing their choice. As they passed, the humans felt a cold chill filling them; seeping into their bones and making them shudder violently. Eventually, two students stood before the Dark Lord, quaking in their boots. Lucius Malfoy immediately dropped to his knees and started to grovel. Sirius Black drew his wand and tried to hex the man in front of him, only to find his spell bouncing off a powerful shield and flying off at a tangent. With a wave of Harry’s hand, his wand flew into the air and was neatly attached to the roof of

the Great Hall. Sirius gaped in the direction it had flown, before becoming angry at 'Voldemort'.

" You bastard! What did you do *that* for?"

Most of the people in the Great Hall gasped at his outburst, and held their breath in anticipation of what would happen to the Gryffindor. Sirius, realising that he had apparently talked back to the Dark Lord, started to back away. Another gesture secured him to the spot, making him even more afraid.

" Now, now, we can't have *that*, can we? You *will* show me some respect, or you will not live to see the end of the day. I will release you now, but I expect you to do as I command. Do you understand?"

" Yes."

" Yes *what*?"

" Yes, Sir?"

" Not good enough."

" Yes, Voldemort?"

" Even worse."

" Yes, My Lord."

" Much better, thank you."

Sirius bowed his head in shame at having to call the creature before him 'my Lord'. He had fought all of his life against the Dark members of his family, wanting to secure his position on the Light side. To say such a thing to the evil wizard in front of the whole school was the ultimate humiliation. Harry was grinning inside, knowing that this had to be killing Sirius. This part of the plan had been Sev's idea, his own way of getting back at the boy who had tried to kill him. After a moment of letting the two unfortunate students in front of him squirm a little, Harry gestured one of his black clad helpers forward.

“ I would like to perform a little test. If you would?”

Sev pulled the sleeve of his robe up and revealed the Dark Mark burned into his skin. Some of the teachers leapt to their feet when they saw this, drawing their wands and pointing them at the Death Eater. Harry wandlessly summoned their wands, and stuck them to the ceiling next to Sirius'. They gaped at their disappearing wands, and at the figure that had performed such a powerful summoning spell without his own wand. They knew that not even Dumbledore was capable of such strong wandless magic. Harry just smirked before holding his finger over Sev's Dark Mark. He threw a glance at the headmaster, who realised what he was going to do and nodded almost imperceptibly. As soon as Harry saw this, he touched Sev's Mark, using his connection to Voldemort through the Dark Lord's Mark to call the Death Eaters. Harry had thought this an ingenious part of his plan. Not only would the real Death Eaters get in trouble when they all turned up at Voldemort's headquarters for a nonexistent meeting, but it would also reveal to Dumbledore all of the Death Eaters amongst the Hogwarts population. Sure enough, as the call went out, about a dozen of the students, most of which were Slytherin seventh years, clutched their arms briefly. Looking up at Dumbledore, Harry saw the headmaster nod back to him. He had seen who had reacted, and would pay close attention to them in the future. Grinning, Harry turned back to the students and waited as a few answered the call and came to his side. Once it was obvious that no others were going to come forward, he turned to those who had, his face immediately twisting in anger.

“ You *idiots!*”

The Death Eater children glanced at each other in worry, none realising what they had done until Harry continued.

“ How dare you reveal yourselves? In front of at least a dozen Order of the Phoenix members, no less? That was a test of your loyalty, and you have all failed! Sit down, now. I will punish you later. As for you two,” he said, pointing at the students picked out by the 'Dementors', “ Come forward and show me your arms.”

The pair did as asked, the only one not shaking being Lucius. As soon as Harry saw the Dark Mark on his arm, he waved his hand in dismissal and gestured for the next person to come forward. Sirius stepped forward, a look of trepidation on his face. Harry roughly grabbed his arm and sent an amused look to Sev, who was still stood by his side, his face covered by his Death Eater mask. Harry knew he was enjoying this, though. His body language screamed of titillation. Harry turned back to his worried looking godfather and wrapped his hand around his arm, clearly enunciating a spell.

“ Morsmordre.”

Sirius screamed as pain shot through his arm. Dumbledore leapt to his feet, a look of concern on his face. Harry stared him down, sending him a quick mental message.

~It's alright. I'm just teaching him a lesson. I'll remove it when I'm finished~

~I hope you do Harry, for your sake, I hope you do~

Sirius stood frozen in shock, cradling his arm and glaring slightly at his new master. Harry smirked and raised his hand. The scattered 'Death Eaters' moved from their positions around the room and gathered behind him, standing strategically with some to his left and some to his right. It was time for the fun to begin.

“ Sirius Black, I believe it is time for you to learn what it is to be one of my loyal Death Eaters. My servants will now educate you. Minions? Take it away!”

The 'Dementors' had floated away unnoticed towards the ceiling, and were hiding in the rafters. Peeves activated some charms Harry had set up at lunch and soft music began to fill the Hall. Students and teachers alike stared in disbelief as the 'Death Eaters' began to sway from side to side in perfect time. It was obvious this had been well rehearsed. As one, they began to sing, the sound echoing around the Great Hall and reaching everyone's ears.

“ I will follow him,



Follow him wherever he may go.

And near him I always will be,

For nothing can keep me away.

He is my destiny.

I will follow him.

Ever since he touched my heart I knew.

There isn't an ocean too deep,

A mountain so high it can keep,

Keep me away.

Away from his love."

The music suddenly sped up and the 'Death Eaters' started to sing and dance in earnest, leaping about behind 'Voldemort' like something out of a musical stage show. All the people in the Hall could do was watch in bemusement.

" I love him, I love him, I love him,

And where he goes I'll follow, I'll follow, I'll follow."

Minh stepped forward at this point and stood next to Harry, singing a solo.

" I will follow him,

Follow him wherever he may go

There isn't an ocean too deep,

A mountain so high it can keep,

Keep me away."

Everyone joined in for the next part, joining hands and dancing in a circle around Harry. Sirius was simply stood there in front of them, watching the proceedings in horror.

“ We will follow him,

Follow him.

Follow him wherever he may go.

There isn't an ocean too deep,

A mountain so high it can keep,

Keep us away.

Away from his love.”

Ginny took centre stage this time, backed up by the rest of them. As she danced, she moved suggestively against Harry, something they hadn't planned in rehearsals. Harry started to blush furiously, and quickly threw up a concealing charm to hide it.

“ Oh, yeah,

Oh yes I love him,

(I'll follow)

I'm gonna follow

(True love)

He'll always be my true love

(Forever)

From now until forever.”

I love him, I love him, I love him,

And where he goes I'll follow, I'll follow, I'll follow.

He'll always be my true love, my true love, my true love,

From now until forever, forever, forever.

There isn't an ocean too deep,

A mountain so high it can keep,

Keep us away.

Away from his love."

As the song reached its crescendo, the group assembled behind Harry, dancing together in a line. When the song ended, the music began to fade out, thanks to Peeves and Gallatea in the rafters. Over the course of the song, the occupants of the Great Hall began to realise they had been had. Some started to clap and cheer, mostly the Gryffindors, and the teachers started to relax. Most of the people at the Slytherin table, and Sirius, hadn't caught on yet, and were still gaping at the group in front of them. Harry raised his hands, silencing those who were cheering.

" Thank you, thank you, I'm glad you liked it. I think that about summed it up for you, Mr. Black. Don't you think?"

In response, Sirius started to shake his head in disbelief. Harry purposely took this the wrong way and grinned wider.

" You still don't get it? What a shame. I guess we'd better explain it a bit better. Minions? Once more please."

Peeves took his cue and started the music again. This time most of the Death Eaters stepped back, allowing Eustace to come forward. He knelt in front of Harry and started to sing, a look of adoration on his face.

" Look into my eyes

You will see

What you mean to me.

Such a heart,

Such a soul,

And when you find me there

You'll search no more.

Don't tell me it's not worth trying for.

You can't tell me it's not worth dying for.

You know it's true.

Everything I do,

I do it for you

Look into your heart.

You will find,

There's nothing left to hide.

Take me as I am,

Take my life.

I will give it up,

I would sacrifice.

Don't tell me it's not worth fighting for.

I can't help it, there's nothing I want more.

You know it's true.

Everything I do,

I do it for you.  
There's no love  
Like your love,  
And no other  
Could give more love.  
There's no way  
There's loving.  
All the time,  
All the way.

You can't tell me it's not worth trying for,  
I can't help it, there's nothing I want more.  
I would fight for you,  
I lie for you,  
Walk the wire for you,  
I would die for you.  
You know it's true.  
Everything I do,  
I do it for you."

As Eustace rose, Harry shook his hand and applauded with the rest of the Hall. By this time, everyone realised that this was all an elaborate joke, meant to first frighten and then entertain them. As

soon as people realised there was no danger, they started to enjoy themselves. Harry bowed low and yelled out to them.

“ Are you having fun?”

“ Yes!” was the resounding reply.

“ Good, just sit back, relax, and enjoy the show!”

This time Ginny stepped forward once more, the others fading into the background and moving around, flowing in an elaborate dance meant to make the whole scene seem more surreal. Ginny had been given two solo parts in their prank, as she had one of the better singing voices. What Harry hadn't expected to see, though, was the amount of emotion in her eyes as she sang it to him.

“ How do I

Get through one night without you?

If I had to live without you,

What kind of life would that be?

Oh, I

I need you in my arms

Need you to hold.

You're my world my heart my soul,

And if you ever leave,

Baby you would take away everything good in my life,

And tell me now,

How do I live without you?

I want to know.

How do I breathe without you?

If you ever go

How do I ever, ever survive?

How do I, how do I, oh how do I live

Without you?

There'd be no soul in my sky.

There would be no love in my life.

There'd be no world left for me.

And I,

Oh Baby I don't know what I would do.

I'd be lost if I lost you.

If you ever leave,

Baby you would take away everything real in my life.

And tell me now,

How do I live without you?

I want to know.

How do I breathe without you?

If you ever go

How do I ever, ever survive?

How do I, how do I, oh how do I live?

Please tell me baby.

How do I go on?

If you ever leave.

Well baby you would take away everything,

I need you with me.

Baby don't you know that you're everything good in my life?

And tell me now

How do I live without you?

I want to know.

How do I breathe without you?

If you ever go

How do I ever, ever survive?

How do I, how do I, oh how do I live?

How do I live without you?

How do I live without you baby?

How do I live?"

As the song came to an end, the cheering in the Great Hall reached an all time high. Harry had spent the whole time entranced by Ginny's eyes. As she stood up and came level to him, he pulled her to him and kissed her firmly on the lips. The noise in the Hall tripled as the pair remained oblivious. As they pulled away, Harry grinned at the girl in his arms and leant in to whisper in her ear.

"I'm ready."



Ginny let out a loud squeal and pulled Harry in for another kiss. When they finally broke apart and looked out over the Hall at the beaming faces, Harry noticed Dumbledore was sitting at the head table with a very satisfied smirk on his face. Harry grinned at him and pulled away from Ginny, before whispering to her again.

“Ginny, will you be my girlfriend?”

“Of course, Harry. You don’t know how long I’ve waited to hear you ask me that.”

“I have a fair idea. Now I think we should finish this later. We have a show to complete, and the next bit is the best.”

Ginny moved away from him reluctantly and rejoined her fellow ‘Death Eaters’. This was their final song, and they had wanted to make it special. It was supposed to be a fun last day for the students, but they also wanted to put a message in that was especially aimed at the leaving seventh years. As they took their places, the floating candles all went out, leaving the Hall in darkness. A spotlight appeared, illuminating ‘Voldemort’ and following him as he moved around. After taking a minute to gather his nerve, Harry began to sing.

“I’ve paid my dues.

Time after time.

I’ve done my sentence

But committed no crime.

And bad mistakes

I’ve made a few.

I’ve had my share of sand,

Kicked in my face

But I’ve come through.”

Harry collapsed to the floor as the 'Death Eaters' stepped forward. In a shower of brilliant gold, yellow and orange sparks that gathered in the shape of a giant phoenix, they threw off their robes and masks to reveal Order of the Phoenix uniforms of shining red and gold and faces covered in shimmering charmed feathers, making them look like overgrown versions of Fawkes. The students and teachers 'ooh'ed and 'aah'ed as they saw them. Harry had fallen silent, and the phoenixes were now singing.

"We are the champions my friends.

And we'll keep on fighting till the end.

We are the champions,

We are the champions.

No time for losers,

'Cause we are the champions

Of the world."

Harry crawled to his feet as the giant illuminated phoenix began to fade and the Order members disappeared into the shadows. He looked out over the watching crowd and started once more to sing.

"I've taken my bows,

And my curtain calls.

You've brought me fame and fortune

And everything that goes with it.

I thank you all

But it's been no bed of roses,

No pleasant cruises.

I consider it a challenge before the whole human race

And I never lose.”

As the last word was sung a brilliant flash of green light hit him from behind, and he fell to the floor in a heap. Most of the students gasped and looked rather alarmed, but realised it was all part of the show as green sparks flew into the air creating a mangled version of the Dark Mark. In the light of this new apparition, the Order stepped forward once more, singing the chorus at the top of their lungs.

“ We are the champions my friends.

And we’ll keep on fighting till the end.

We are the champions,

We are the champions.

No time for losers

‘Cause we are the champions

Of the world.

We are the champions my friends.

And we’ll keep on fighting till the end.

We are the champions,

We are the champions.

No time for losers

‘Cause we are the champions.”

The noise was phenomenal. Even most of the younger Slytherins were cheering with the rest of the school. Harry stood up and brushed off his robes, before moving to stand in the centre of the performers, with a line of Order members on either side of him. They all took a bow as Gallatea and Peeves floated down to them, also bowing for the crowd. It took a while for the noise to finally die down, but when it did, Harry stepped forward to address the school,

shedding his Voldemort guise and eliciting gasps from those who had not yet realised who was the master prankster.

“ Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you for your co-operation. We felt that, as it was the last day of the school year, we would give you all a show that you won't forget for a very long time. It started off as a simple prank, but after much consideration I decided that you deserved a special treat to say thank you for putting up with our pranks all year. As you may or may not know, my three friends and I will be leaving you tomorrow, for we have places to go and things to do. We have all had a wonderful year here with you all, and no matter where we go, we will always have this experience to look back on with fond memories, and happy hearts. Thank you!”

Ginny stepped forward and wrapped her arm around her boyfriend as the Hall erupted into applause. They both knew they would be sad to see this time go, but they were looking forward to the future, and the wealth of new experiences they would face together.

## Chapter Twenty Eight – Tearful Goodbyes

The rest of the evening went well for everyone. The pranksters all left the Hall, changing back into their regular school robes for the students and normal clothes for the adults. Harry concealed those who could not become invisible, and they all headed back to their tables, where they took the place of the fakes left to conceal their absence. The mood in the Great Hall was even more jovial than before, and the only person not enjoying himself was Sirius. The Gryffindor was sitting at his table, a deep scowl on his face. Harry could see from across the Hall that the newly created Dark Mark was still bothering him. Despite his attempts to look surly, Sirius couldn't conceal the pain in his eyes. While eating his meal, he was favouring his uninjured arm a lot, and the Boy-Who-Lived felt a little guilty. Sev elbowed him in the ribs, bringing him out of his thoughts.

“ Stop it.”

“ Stop what?” he asked in confusion.

“ Stop feeling guilty. He deserved it. Anyway, it's not like it's permanent. You'll get rid of it later, right?”

“ Of course. I'm just worried that he'll never forgive me for ridiculing him in front of the whole school like that.”

“ He will. Anyway, isn't it you who should be forgiving him, and not the other way around?”

“ I think he's suffered enough. He didn't intend to kill you, just scare you, and he's been thoroughly humiliated in front of everyone he knows. He has to spend the next two years of his life with these people, and whenever he does something they don't like, they can remind him of this.”

“ I know I will. I can't wait!”

“ Sev, don't provoke him. He's already tried to kill you once. Anyway, I think more than anything it's hurt him inside. It doesn't matter that he will be laughed at for this. You said it yourself; half of his family is Dark. He doesn't want to be associated with them, and what

happened tonight went against everything he has spent his life trying to prove. His allegiance to the Light. Having Shirley's Mark burned into his skin will be the ultimate degradation."

"Can you really remove it?"

"Yes, of course. The only one who can remove the Dark Mark is the one who created it. Or if you have one yourself, the one who created yours. The one to give the original Mark has power over all created thereafter."

"Does that mean you could remove mine if you wanted to? Because you gave Shirley his?"

Harry looked at his friend for a moment, considering what to tell him. He knew that Sev never asked for the Dark Mark, and would do anything to get rid of it. On the other hand, the Order needed their spy, and Sev was the only person they could trust with the job. Harry had a big decision to make. He could lie to his friend, and break a trust he had worked very hard to gain. Or he could tell the truth, and offer Sev the choice. If he made the wrong decision, the Order would be without a spy, but Sev would be free to live his own life. If he chose to help the Order, he would be condemned for the rest of his days. Harry looked deep into his friend's eyes, making his decision.

"I could."

"Really? You could make it go away?"

"If that's what you want. I should have told you after Christmas, but I acted selfishly. We needed a spy, and you were a good candidate. The decision is yours. I will remove it if you want, and won't try and talk you out of it. All I ask is that you give it some thought. Tell me tomorrow before you leave."

"Alright, Harry, I'll think about it."

"That's all I ask."

Harry turned away and looked out over the Great Hall at all of the smiling faces. There were so many people he had grown to love over

the course of the year. It would be really hard to say goodbye. He knew that the next day before the train left would be his last chance to see most of them. Those in the Order he would see later in the summer at meetings, but the others he would be seeing for the last time. Even if he met them in his own time, they wouldn't be the same as they were now. Minerva was the perfect example. He had known her as a seventh year student in the forties, and it wasn't the same seeing her now, or even thinking of her in his first four years at Hogwarts. She was less carefree, and seemed to have the weight of the world on her shoulders half of the time. He missed seeing her as a child, and he dreaded seeing those he knew now as adults. Sev was the one he would miss the most. At the moment, he was the younger boy's best friend and confidante. In the future, Harry was just an annoying student that the Potions Master despised. Breaking through that would be hard. Sev had twenty years of bitterness and self loathing in Harry's time that wasn't present yet. He was still a child. A rather mature child, but a child nonetheless. He still had some of the innocence that the hated Potions Master had lost long ago.

Harry's eyes met Ginny's across at the Ravenclaw table, and his heart constricted in his chest as she sent him a dazzling smile. It had been over a year since their time together in Grindelwald's prison. Then, he hadn't been ready to move on with his life and leave Gallatea, even though they could never be together again. A thousand years separated the two, and it was an obstacle Harry logically knew could never be breached. As a ghost, Gallatea could never be with him, and no matter how much he wished things could be different, it was an impossible situation. But now he looked at Ginny and saw a beautiful young woman who had loved him for years. At first, he knew it was simply a crush on the 'Boy-Who-Lived', but over the course of the last three years, as she had grown to know him as a person and not just a figurehead, her feelings had become more real, and now she loved him for who he was. That was something Harry had always wanted. With Gallatea he had found someone who couldn't relate to his fame, and therefore it was never an issue between them. When Harry finally realised he would eventually have to find someone from his own time to be with, Ginny was the perfect choice. She knew him for himself, and he had feelings for her in return. Never again would she be swayed by his

fame, as she had seen him as a real human being. Someone who was fallible, just like everyone else. Harry couldn't deny that he was special, and always had been, but Ginny was somebody who had seen him at his worst and still loved him. When he had been fighting his depression after the vampire bite, she had risked everything in telling Remus, all so he could help Harry get better. In Grindelwald's headquarters she had seen him tortured day after day, and had still comforted him. When he thought about it, Ginny was the one person who understood him, and that was a good enough reason to be with her. He would always love Gallatea, but it was time for him to move on with his life and find happiness again.

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The next day Harry woke up bright and early. It had taken him a long time to go to sleep the night before, as he had been thinking over everything that had happened over the last year. It had been rather eventful, especially with Voldemort in full power. Harry had learned to appreciate what the adults of his time had to live through the first time, and when he went back he vowed he would share some of his experiences with the students. Although they had been told by Dumbledore after the Triwizard Tournament that the Dark Lord had risen again, they didn't really know what that meant. They had heard stories growing up from their parents and older siblings, but they themselves didn't know what was to come. The time the time travellers found themselves in at the moment was at the height of Voldemort's Dark Reign of Terror, and they had been given the unique opportunity of seeing him at his worst. This would give them an advantage when they went home, as they could plan counter offensives knowing the way their enemy would think.

Harry eventually dragged himself out of bed and pulled his clothes on, waiting for the morning knock on his door. Both he and Sev had packed their clothes the night before, so they would both be ready to go down to breakfast on time. Most of the rest of the school would be in a panic, running around trying to find stray socks and books, but the two Slytherins were ready to leave. Sev didn't want to go home, as it would mean spending the summer with his father, but he didn't have much choice in the matter. Harry had offered to let him stay in Domus Corvus Corax with him and the other time travellers, but he



had turned the older boy down. His father was an issue he would eventually have to face, and if he did decide to stay as the Order spy, then staying at the headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix would look more than a little suspicious to a hardcore Death Eater.

Eventually, at ten to eight, Harry heard a knock on the door. He went straight over and pulled it open, revealing Severus. Waving him in, Harry led his young apprenticed to a chair and sat down opposite him.

“Hi Sev. Ready to leave?”

“I’ve packed, but I’m not looking forward to going home. My father’s not the most pleasant person to spend time with.”

“I can imagine. Will you be able to come to Order meetings this summer?”

“I doubt it. Why?”

“As you know, I always planned on leaving, as did Hermione, Ron and Ginny. As you would have heard last night, we are not coming back next year, so this is the last day I will see you.”

“But Harry, I’ll see you once the school year starts at the Order meetings. My father can’t stop me going when I’m not at home. Just because you’re not at school doesn’t mean we can’t keep in touch. We can owl each other...”

“Sev, you’re not getting it. When I say I’m leaving, I mean I’m leaving for good. Where I’m going, I can’t have any contact with people from here. I have to go back to the place I come from. I never told you where I was from, but it’s time for me to go home. I’ve been away for three years, and I want to see my family again. I’ll see you again, I promise, but I doubt you will be able to accept me when the time comes.”

“I will, Harry. You are the only real friend I have ever had. You’ve taught me everything I need to survive in this war and be a spy. I’ve decided to stay as a spy, because you helped me to see that I can do a lot of good working for the Order, and this is the best way I will be of use.”

“ It will be a hard life, Sev. You will end up bitter and lonely, even if you don’t want to.”

“ How do you know that? How do you know a lot of things? You seem to be able to tell the future, even though it is your friend Ginny who is the Seer. Does she tell you? Or is there another reason?”

“ There’s another reason, but I can’t tell you. It’s too much of a security risk.”

“ Harry, you can trust me.”

“ I know, Sev, but I’m afraid you’ll laugh at me, or not believe me. It’s a pretty incredible story, and not many people would be able to accept it.”

“ I would.”

Harry looked at his friend and saw the earnest look on his face. Coming to a decision, he let out a long sigh and stood up.

“ Are you hungry?” he asked the younger boy.

“ Not really. Why?”

“ Let’s go for a walk.”

Harry held the door to his room open and waited for Sev to go through it before exiting and shutting and warding it behind him. He strode through the common room and out into the dungeons, looking back to make sure that Sev was following him. He led the other Slytherin out of Hogwarts and on to the quidditch pitch, stopping at a discoloured piece of grass. Sev came to a halt next to him, and waited for his friend and mentor to speak. Eventually, Harry waved his hand over the ground and muttered under his breath. Before them, words began to appear on a piece of stone, written in three different languages. Sev glanced at the plaque before him, recognition shining in his eyes.

“ Severus, do you remember the day we came for the quidditch tryouts, and I showed you this spot?

“ Of course. You said you’d explain when I was older.”

“ I did. I was going to leave it for another twenty years, but I believe now would be an appropriate time to tell you.”

“ Tell me what?”

“ The truth. I just hope you don’t hate me for it. For who I am.”

“ I could never hate you, Harry.”

“ But you do. With a fiery passion. You see, I’m not from around here. In fact, I’m from a very long way away. In time, but not in space.”

“ In time but not in space? That doesn’t make sense.”

“ It does. What I am about to tell you can go no further. Only a few know the truth, and even then, only Dumbledore knows nearly everything. He knows of the past, but not the future. You see, Sev, I *am* from Hogwarts. I have spent seven years of my life here. Just not now.”

“ Not now?”

“ No. I started in my first year in 1991. I spent my first four years there as normal, but then in 1995 everything went wrong. I accidentally activated a magic amulet called the Amulet of Time. That’s why you haven’t seen me before this year. I have always been here, just not at the same time as you. My friends, Ginny, Hermione and Ron, and I have been travelling through time for the last three years. We spent our fifth year at school in the time of the Hogwarts founders. I was present when Salazar Slytherin was defeated. I saved Godric Gryffindor’s life. I fell in love with Rowena Ravenclaw’s daughter. I was there. I lived it. And then I had to leave. You see, the amulet only works once a year, and if I had stayed there, I would have been trapped. Why do you think I’m so close to the Grey Lady? She is my love, Gallatea. And Peeves. I knew him when he was a first year. And then last year, we went to a different time. We ended up in 1943. I saw the defeat of Grindelwald, and placed the Dark Mark on Tom Riddle’s arm when he had just left

Hogwarts. He was Grindelwald's apprentice. This is how I know so much. How I have developed skills that no-one else knows about. How I know wandless magic. I wanted so much to share this with you, Sev, but I couldn't. I've grown to like you as a friend. You are a wonderful person, and I am really going to miss you when I go back to 1995."

"You're kidding, right?"

"I'm afraid not. Ask me anything. Anything that would prove to you that I am what I say I am."

"Tell me what happens in the future. If you are from 1995, you will know."

"That's the one thing I can't reveal. I didn't even tell Dumbledore."

"Why not?"

"Because if you knew what was to come, you might try and change it. The four of us have tried very hard over the last three years to make sure not to change anything. The more people we tell, the greater the risk. I can't tell you what happens."

"I hate you, don't I? You keep saying that someday I will hate you, even though I have never given you any reason to think that. At first, I thought you were just being paranoid, but now I guess it's because you know for sure. You know that I hate you. What I don't understand is why? Why would I ever hate you, Harry?"

"Because of who I am. Who my father is."

"Who is your father?"

"Look at the stone, Severus Snape, and learn the truth."

Sev looked down at the black onyx set into the ground in front of him. The Anglo-Saxon and elvish were incomprehensible to him, but the message in English made him believe Harry's story. There was no other way a thousand year old plaque could be inscribed in

modern English unless someone from the future had been there. When he read the inscription again, though, his heart froze.

**To Gallatea Ravenclaw**

**A special gift for a special friend. I will remember you always.**

**From Harry Potter**

“ Harry Potter. Your name is Harry Potter.”

“ Yes.”

“ Your father is James Potter. James Potter, the boy who has ridiculed me since my first year.”

“ Yes. I knew you hated him, which was one of the reasons I never told you earlier. I wanted you to get to know me before you knew my name. In the future, you are my Potions Master. You have always been horrible to me, just because you had a grudge against James Potter for saving your life from the werewolf. You judged me then because you hated my father. You didn’t give me a chance to prove I was more than him. That I could understand. In this time, you have seen that I am more than my father will ever be.”

“ I don’t get it. You’re nothing like James Potter. Like *any* Potter.”

“ You’re right. Over the years, I have led a hard life. I have learned that Light and Dark aren’t so different. I have lost all of the prejudices of my youth. I have spent time in all four Hogwarts Houses, which has given me the chance to see the world from different perspectives. You once told me that the Snapes and the Potters never got on because your family was always Dark, and mine was always Light. You also told me that if you ever met a Dark Potter, you would give them the benefit of the doubt. I am asking you to honour that promise. I want to be the one to break the chain of hatred that has plagued our two families for centuries. Help me break it. Be the first Snape to understand, and be understood.”

Sev stared at the boy who had taught him so much. How to fight. How to duel. How to stand up for himself and what he believes

in. How to respect himself. As he thought it over, he realised that Harry had never been anything but a good friend to him. He had always stuck by him, no matter what, and even crossing his own father to do so. He had been mad at James after the Whomping Willow incident, because Sev had been in danger. The fifth year suddenly understood that Harry had chosen to befriend him, even though he was horrid to him in the future. He had given him the benefit of the doubt, and grown to know the person Sev was now. The least he could do was return the favour.

“ Harry, you’re right. We know each other. We are practically like brothers. We can’t continue like Potters and Snapes. I’m your friend, and always will be.”

Harry grinned widely, and pulled Sev into a brief embrace. He hadn’t wanted to tell the other, but now that he had, he felt he had done the right thing. It was just a shame Sev wouldn’t remember any of it...

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As the pair got back to the castle, the rest of the school was gathering in the Entrance Hall to wait for the horseless carriages that would take them to Hogsmeade. As Sev went down to the Slytherin dungeons to gather his possessions, Harry went over to a few people, saying goodbye to them all. Eventually, he came to a stop in front of the Marauders. Sirius scowled at him, and Peter looked blank, but the others all gave him a warm welcome. Lily gave him a warm hug, and James and Remus each gave him pats on the back. Harry shook Peter’s hand briefly before turning to Sirius.

“ I’m sorry for what I did last night, Sirius. It was the last part of your punishment. I shouldn’t have been so harsh on you.”

“ Harsh? You call permanent disfigurement harsh?”

“ It’s not permanent. I created it; I can get rid of it. Just give me your arm.”

Sirius gave him a wary look before lifting his left arm and pulling up his sleeve, revealing the Dark Mark. Harry placed his hand over it and concentrated hard. Sirius felt a slight tingling sensation where

the ugly black mark was, and gasped when Harry removed his hand, revealing unblemished skin.

“ I’m sorry. Forgive me?”

Sirius looked into Harry’s guilt filled eyes and gave him a watery smile.

“ Forgiven. I’m sorry for the prank I pulled on Snape. It was irresponsible, and stupid. Forgive me?”

“ Forgiven.”

The pair embraced briefly, and Harry went over to have a word with Dumbledore. The headmaster nodded and clapped his hands to get everyone’s attention.

“ Could everyone please assemble on the front steps by year and House? One of our leaving students would like to take a photograph.”

Many of the students started to grumble, but everyone took their places. Harry watched as Ginny set the timer on her camera and rushed to take her place. When the flash went off, Harry weaved a spell, placing it on all of the students, excluding his parents. The spell was set to activate an hour later, giving him time to say goodbye. The charm had been designed by Hermione earlier in the year for when they had to leave. It had been cast over the Order members at the last full Order meeting, excluding only the Hogwarts staff, Eustace, and the elves. It was designed to let the people remember the events of the year, but none of the specifics of the four time travellers. They wouldn’t remember their names, what they looked like, or anything to do with time travel. The spell would only be broken when they saw the four for the first time in the future. It was their safeguard against anyone changing the future. It hadn’t been necessary the other times, but 1976 was too close to their own time for comfort, and they couldn’t risk it.

Once the photo was taken, everyone made their way down to the carriages. Once they reached the station, Harry, Ginny, Hermione and Ron said tearful goodbyes to everyone. Harry gave Sev a long hug, while Ginny did the same to Remus. When it got to Harry and

his parents, he whispered to them not to mention any of the specifics of their presence to Sirius, Remus and Peter, telling them of the spell. Although they didn't know the reason why, they agreed and each gave him a long embrace, with Lily giving him a kiss on the cheek. They promised to see him on the first of September, before he left, as arranged. As they climbed into the train compartment and the train pulled away, Harry watched them waving through the window as tears slowly trailed down his cheeks. Ginny came over and pulled him into a tight hug as he cried for the parents he was losing all over again.



## Chapter Twenty Nine – Summer of Woes

The summer started off fairly well, all things considered. As soon as the four time travellers had finished seeing off their friends at the station, they headed back up to the castle to get ready for their own departure. As Hogwarts would be deserted in the summer, leaving them with nothing to do, they had all decided that moving to Domus Corvus Corax would be the best thing to do. It was close to the Order, so they would be available for meetings, as well as having heavy wards and almost limitless resources. They would always have something to do, whether it was practicing their skills, planning strategies, or doing research in the library.

The one thing they would have to be careful of was who got to see them. The spell they had placed on most of the Order and Hogwarts population had several conditions. The time delay had allowed those affected to get out of range of the four before it became active, preventing any mishaps. The reversal of the spell was keyed into their current appearance, and when they showed up in their own time, people would remember what had really happened in the year they had been there. They had to be very specific in the spell, as they couldn't have people like Severus and Remus remembering them when they were teaching them in their earlier years. Harry hadn't thought of this when he first thought up the spell, but luckily for all of them Hermione was thorough in her planning. The only thing they had to worry about now was being seen by anyone they had cast the spell on. If they were seen, the effects would be nullified, and recasting wasn't an option. It was a one time charm, so they had to get it right. This meant that when they went to Order meetings, they would remain invisible and not announce their presence. The only ones who still retained their full memories of the events were James, Lily, Eustace, the elves, Dumbledore and Voldemort. They had cast the spell on the rest of the Hogwarts staff before leaving the school. While a few of the Death Eaters had seen them at attacks, they didn't know enough about them for it to be a real issue.

The only problem remaining was the ghosts. The spell wouldn't work on them, for obvious reasons, but it was imperative that they didn't slip up when the time travellers' eleven year old selves came to Hogwarts. It could be a disaster if they forgot, and mentioned any of

the things that had happened to their younger selves. This was why Harry found himself hanging back when the other three were ready to leave via the fireplace in Harry's room. Telling them to go on ahead to Corvus Corax, he contacted the two ghosts and waited for them to arrive. It was time, he felt, to tie up as many loose ends as possible before he left for the summer. There were still some issues that were unresolved, but he already had plans for how to fix them. As Peeves and Gallatea floated through the wall, chatting amiably in Anglo-Saxon, Harry cleared his throat to get their attention before taking a seat on one of the chairs in front of his fireplace.

"Peeves, 'Tea, I need to talk to you about some things."

"What like, Harry?" Gallatea asked.

"Well, Hermione, Ron, Ginny and I believe that the next time jump we make will probably take us home. We have already had three trips, and we are getting very close to our own time as it is, so it is highly likely we will be going home at the end of the summer."

Harry sat in silence for a few moments to allow this to sink in before continuing.

"The reason I asked you here was to discuss security with you."

"You want to make sure we don't tell," Peeves guessed.

"Yes. We have cast a spell on nearly everybody, making them forget any specifics of our identities until we return to the nineties. The problem is, it won't work on you. Not that I don't trust you both, but we know how disastrous it would be if anything got out. Especially at this point in time. On our previous jaunts, it wasn't really an issue, as the events we have tried so hard to preserve were years and years away. This time, though, things are imminent. In five short years, their whole world will change, and we need that to happen the way it is supposed to. Can I count on you both to be discreet until such a time as it is safe to talk about it?"

"Of course, Harry. You know you can count on me," Gallatea assured him.

“ And me,” Peeves agreed.

“ I’m glad. Thank you.”

“ No problem, Harry. Anyway, I must be off, I have some pranks to plan for when the ikkle firsties turn up in September. See you in a couple of months.”

“ Bye, Peeves,” Harry said as the ghost floated through the ceiling. Silence descended as Harry furiously thought about how to start the conversation he had wanted to have with his ex-girlfriend since the night before.

“ Um... ‘Tea, can I talk to you about something?”

Gallatea gave him a curious look, before a smile spread over her face.

“ Is this about last night?”

“ Yes. I need to talk to you about Ginny...”

Gallatea floated over and placed a freezing hand on Harry’s arm. Although the contact wasn’t real, and the Ravenclaw ghost couldn’t really feel the warm flesh under her palm, the gesture brought a measure of comfort to Harry.

“ Harry, I love you, and I always will, but I knew one day you would move on with your life. I dare say that if I had lived, I would have eventually done the same. I have said since you arrived in 1943 that I don’t mind you moving on. I am actually pleased that you chose Ginny, though. She is a wonderful girl, and I can see in her eyes that she loves you a lot. And I know for a fact that you care a great deal about her. Be happy, that’s all I want.”

“ Thank you so much, ‘Tea,” Harry said with tears in his eyes, “ I knew I couldn’t move on properly without your blessing. I love you, and I always will. You are my first love, and will always have a special place in my heart. But you’re right; it’s time for me to move on. I don’t know how long I’ll live once I get home, but I want to spend what time I do have as happily as possible.”

“ I understand that Harry. I really do. Just promise me one thing.”

“ Anything.”

“ Promise you will always be my friend, no matter what happens.”

“ For as long as I live.”

“ Thank you.”

“ ‘Tea, can I ask you something?’”

“ Of course.”

Harry took a deep breath and let it out slowly. He had been wanting to question Gallatea on this matter for the last two years, but the time for an in depth discussion had never arisen.

“ What was Glenadade like? I mean, you’ve told me the basics, like that you saw him at quidditch matches, and that he grew up and had a family. But I need to know more. Gallatea, please tell me about my son. I need to know.”

Gallatea gave him a rather startled look at this strange request, but soon pulled herself together.

“ There’s not much I can tell you. Just what I saw and heard from the quidditch pitch. He joined the team early on, and was a magnificent flyer, just like his father. A watched him at every game and practice he went to. Except in his seventh year. For some reason, he must have given up quidditch then, as I never saw him after the end of his sixth year until years later, when he was already grown up. He might have been too busy at that time, as he had to learn extra defence.”

“ What?! Why?” Harry asked, startled at this revelation.

“ Well, from what I could gather, he was involved in the war against Lucifina.”

“ Who?”

“ Lady Lucifina, the Dark Witch who took Lord Slytherin’s place as our time’s ultimate evil. She was Salazar’s apprentice and lover, intending to rule the wizarding world at his side when he finally took over. Fortunately, you interfered with their plans, and allowed Lord Gryffindor to defeat him. If you hadn’t, they most likely would have won, and taken over. When she saw what happened to Slytherin, she was furious, especially after she had his child and found out it was a squib. She could marginally accept Salazar, because he had once been a wizard, and still had a lot of skills to offer, such as his potion making. He also had a lot of knowledge she needed to take over now that he could not. The child was given to a Muggle family who could not conceive, as at least there the family name could live on, and one day a wizard may once again be born into the Slytherin line.”

“ Voldemort,” Harry whispered.

“ Exactly. Ever since the forties, I have been doing research, with the help of Peeves, into the Slytherin line. What happened to the child and his heirs, for example. Tom Riddle, a Muggle and the last remaining heir of Salazar Slytherin, married a witch, who bore a magical child. A son, named after the father, went on to become the new scourge of the wizarding world.”

It took a moment for all of this to sink in, and Harry covered his face with his hands as he tried to process all of this.

“ So, you’re telling me that Voldemort got his Slytherin blood from his Muggle father, and not from his mother?”

“ Yes, that’s right.”

“ But he hated his Muggle father, just for being a Muggle. Surely he wouldn’t hate Muggles if he knew his father was where his bloodline came from.”

“ I agree. From what I know of him, he would not be pleased by such news.”

Harry nodded his head slowly, filing the information away for later use. Then he drew the conversation back to its original purpose.

“ So, what happened with Lucifina? And why was Glenadade involved in the war?”

“ Well, the Dark Queen used the knowledge she gained from her lover and master to advance herself in the Ministry for Magic, until she became powerful enough to overrule even the Minister himself. She almost took over. One of her goals, though, was to kill our son.”

“ What!? Why would she want to do that?”

“ Because he was *your* son. You were the one who allowed Gryffindor to bring down her beloved mentor, and take his power from him, thus delaying their plans considerably. As you were no longer around to take revenge upon, she decided to punish our son for it.”

“ Why did you never tell me any of this, Gallatea?”

“ Because you would have felt guilty for making the right decision. Glen was fine. In fact, it was he who finally ended the whole thing. It wasn't your fault, Harry, and Glenadade got to live a full and happy life. *He* never held it against you.”

Harry sat in silence for a few minutes until it all sank in. He had done the right thing. Defeating Slytherin saved lives both then, and in the future. But in the process, his own child had been put in unnecessary danger. Dark thoughts began to swirl through his mind, but he was sharply pulled out of them by a strong tingling in his scar. With a heavy sigh, he stood and looked over to Gallatea.

“ Thank you for telling me, 'Tea. I'm glad to know. But I'm afraid that duty calls. I have to go to work. The Order is calling.”

\*~\*~\*

That meeting was the first of many over the course of the summer. It seemed that since the end of the Hogwarts school year, the Dark Lord had stepped up the number of attacks carried out by his Death Eaters. Ron had reasoned that it was probably because of the seventh years. All of those leaving Hogwarts, Beauxbatons and Durmstrang who supported the evil wizard would have been free to

devote their lives to fighting for him in his ranks. The sudden influx of new Death Eaters would make the increased number of attacks possible. The headmaster had agreed with this, pointing out that the same thing had happened over the last few years. Until the numbers were reduced slightly through kills and captures, the attacks would continue well into the next school year.

For the four time travellers, the summer of 1976 was the worst they had ever endured. They had seen a lot of atrocities over the years, both in the wizarding attacks they had been involved in, as well as in the Muggle world in the forties. However, this surpassed everything they had seen before. There were at least three or four attacks a week, each on a large scale, and sometimes simultaneously. When the latter occurred, the four had to split their efforts, each going to different attacks. This made them less effective overall, as they worked best as a team. When they were split up, they were still better than many in the Order, but they could not cause as much damage to the enemy. Especially if the enemy happened to bring such creatures as Dementors or werewolves. The time travellers would then tackle the biggest threat, leaving the Order members to face the Death Eaters alone.

Some of the things that happened that summer went down in the wizarding record books as some of the worst in history. The years before and after were bad, but none lived up to 1976. It was as if Voldemort knew the Order was stronger than it would ever be again, and was trying to eliminate the threat, or at least work it down to a manageable size. People on the Light side, Aurors in particular, were slaughtered mercilessly, and every day the death toll was rising by the hundred. Muggle attacks were now greater in number than attacks on wizarding locations. The Order's numbers were dwindling, and even the members who had previously been dedicated only to research found themselves fighting in the battles. The Hogwarts students who had been recruited were being fiercely trained for combat so that they could enter the battles as soon as possible. Intense recruitment was taking place, with flyers pinned up in public places like Diagon Alley and Platform 9<sup>¾</sup>.

The problem the time travellers faced was that they couldn't get involved as much as they liked. When the attacks happened,

Dumbledore sent them to the places they were needed the most, and they did the best they could. However, they had to spend the whole time invisible, so as not to be seen by the other Order members. The spell was getting irritating, especially when they had to remain hidden during meetings, and they were starting to wish they had waited until just before they left before casting the spell on those they saw on a regular basis. The only ones they could talk to were Harry's parents, who they didn't see very often, as they were undergoing training; Dumbledore, who was always busy; the Potters, who spent most of their time training the younger members; and the elves, Gaerwyn and Lolide, who had become a permanent feature at Domus Corvus Corax. They had turned up at the start of the summer to help as much as they could, and were staying in the old castle as it was the best place for them to remain hidden from the rest of the wizarding world. It wasn't the right time for the existence of the elves to be revealed to the general population, and the pair worked very hard to retain their anonymity. Gaerwyn and Lolide hadn't been present when the spells were cast on the Order, and Harry had decided they wouldn't bother with bespelling them, as they spent most of their time in the elven world anyway. As soon as the attacks started to dwindle at the start of the new school year, they would be returning to Falaryth to be with the rest of their family. While they liked to visit the human world, they were a lot more comfortable in the elven world, and tried to cut their time at Corvus Corax short if possible.

One of the issues Harry was frantically trying to resolve before his departure was the situation with his aunt. Heather Evans was still a prisoner of the Dark Lord, and while Dumbledore believed she was doing the Order the most good where she was, Harry couldn't help but fight him on the issue. The elderly headmaster treated her as a casualty of war, and took advantage of the situation she had found herself in without thinking about what it was doing to *her*. For Dumbledore, she was a convenient way of feeding the Dark Lord false information. For Voldemort, she was nothing but a concubine and spy in the ranks of the Light. For Harry, though, she was family. Family he had never had the chance to get to know properly. He couldn't leave her where she was, but the opportunity to rescue her never arose. That left only one option for him. He would have to do it without Dumbledore's permission, the consequences be damned. He didn't care if he lost the headmaster's respect, or made



him angry. He was going to save his aunt from the persecution she was suffering, and he was going to do it as soon as possible.

### Chapter Thirty – Where Do We Go From Here?

Harry finally got his chance to do something about Heather the week before he was due to leave. An emergency meeting was called in the middle of the night, much to Harry's annoyance. The closer it came to September 1st, the harder the time travellers had been finding it to sleep. They were all wondering what was going to happen to them when they got back to their own time. The main problem they had been having was deciding whether they would be arriving at the time they left, or three years on. The thought of what their families would say if they had been missing for three years was rather disturbing, so they tried not to think about it too much. They preferred to think that no time had passed, and that they would find themselves in their compartment on the Hogwarts Express, with Hedwig in her cage and Peter Pettigrew locked in a jar. They had to consider all eventualities, though, and were prepared to arrive in 1998.

The other thing they found themselves worrying about was whether they would be going back to their own time this year. The book about the amulet hadn't been very accurate on that matter, saying that it could be three or four trips. They thought, though, that because they were so close to the time they left, it was unlikely they would make another stop. Harry couldn't help but worry that they would end up in 1981. He would hate to be sitting in a dorm room the night his parents were killed, knowing there was nothing he could do to prevent it.

When the call came in the middle of the night, the four made their way discreetly to the ball room of Domus Corvus Corax, turning themselves invisible before they entered through the main doors. They were some of the first to arrive, as they didn't have to floo or apparate in from anywhere. The only ones that were there before them were the Potters, Lolide and Gaerwyn. Harry made his way over to the eldest elf, and gently rested his hand on her arm to get her attention. She jumped slightly at the contact, but relaxed when she realised who it must be.

“What's going on, Lolide?” Harry asked her in a whisper.

“ I’m not sure,” she replied, “ I just know that Albus seems to be very agitated. I think there’s another attack, but I can’t say for sure. It’s the only thing that would get him this worried. You know how calm and collected he always is.”

“ I know. It takes a lot to make him visibly concerned.”

“ What’s going on, Harry,” came a voice to the boy’s left. He turned, and found himself staring into thin air. Concentrating a little, he could make out the magical signatures of three invisible people standing in a group at his side. He realised that the other time travellers hadn’t understood his conversation with the elf, as they had been speaking in her native tongue.

“ We’re not sure, Ron, but Dumbledore seems worried. I don’t think we’ll have to wait long, though. Most of the Order council’s here already.”

Sure enough, as Harry spoke the last of the council members came in through the main doors and took their place at the round table. The four time travellers hid themselves in the dark corners of the room as extra cover and began to listen in to the conversation. After clapping to get everyone’s attention, Dumbledore stood up to address the crowd.

“ Ladies and gentlemen, we have a rather serious situation on our hands. Our spy, Severus Snape, has sent me an owl informing me of an attack that is due to begin in the morning. The attack will be at Alder Hey Children’s Hospital in Liverpool. It is a Muggle institute for sick children, and he plans to annihilate it. We cannot let this happen, for it would be a great tragedy for the Muggles.”

“ What are we going to do about it?” Eustace asked.

“ I think the best course of action would be full defence. If we move quickly, we might even be able to evacuate the hospital before any of the Death Eaters turn up. It would save us all a lot of worry, and we would be more likely to win. This is the big one, people. Voldemort will have more Death Eaters at this attack than at any previous to this. He doesn’t know we are forewarned, so let us make the most of it. I want each of you to contact the members you are in charge of,

and let them know about this. We need everyone we can get, as our numbers are dwindling. We will meet here in two hours. Dismissed.”

Everyone hurriedly left the room, heading out to contact their underlings. Each of the council members, with the exception of the Hogwarts students, was in charge of a number of lesser Order members. This prevented full Order meetings from happening very often, as only certain divisions would normally be activated at a time.

An hour and a half later, most of the Order members had been assembled. Some had been unable to make it, but all those who were available had been scrambled and briefed. They were now simply waiting for the word to go. Ten minutes later, after Dumbledore had made the final preparations, the fighters for the Light left Domus Corvus Corax and headed for Liverpool.

Harry watched from the sidelines as chaos descended on the battleground. Fortunately, the Order had arrived early enough to evacuate the hospital before Voldemort's dark forces turned up. The Dark Lord had been most surprised when he and his Death Eaters apparated in to find hundreds of light wizards waiting for them. Nevertheless, they set to their task with a grim determination. It was now ten minutes later, and bodies already littered the floor, both friend and foe. Harry, while helping to fight, had been searching for Heather. He knew she would be here somewhere, as she was never far from the action. He knew that she had recently been openly accused of being a Death Eater, blowing her cover. A young and inexperienced Order member had let it slip to a loyal Death Eater, so now she was simply kept as Voldemort's concubine. He never let her out of his sight, from what Severus had reported to the Order, so naturally she would be at the battle, fighting for the dark side.

Eventually, Harry spotted her across the battleground and started to make his way over towards her. Unfortunately, that included passing through a cluster of Dementors. The large silver stag bounding around the area caught the attention of Voldemort, who recognised it immediately and started to make his way over to get a closer look. This was both a blessing and a curse for Harry, who had to pass right by the Dark Lord without grabbing his attention. Luckily he

managed to slip past and head over to where Heather had temporarily been left unattended. Slipping behind her, he placed a hand over her mouth and nose, blocking off her air supply until she passed out. Laying her on the ground, he was relieved that he had to spend the battles invisible, or he would have been caught quickly. Pulling open his cloak, he rummaged in one of his deep pockets before pulling out a stoppered bottle full of a curious looking potion. Pulling the stopper out, he positioned her head and poured the liquid into her mouth, stroking her throat to make her swallow it. He then quickly replaced the bottle in his robe pocket and stood up, moving a short distance away before waving his hands about in a complicated configuration. Immediately an illusion of Heather appeared next to the body, and a green light seemed to be heading towards her. The illusion faded as the image appeared to fall to the ground, right where the real Heather was positioned. The display had caught the attention of a returning Voldemort, who quickly ran the rest of the distance, placing his skeletal fingers to her neck, checking for a pulse. The howl of rage that came from him grabbed the attention of several nearby Order members, who looked over to see what was going on. When they saw the Dark Lord placing a conjured sheet over the body, the news quickly spread. Heather Evans was dead.

Harry watched in amusement as Voldemort went into a rage, cursing his own Death Eaters for letting something happen to his favourite plaything. The Order were having it a lot easier now that the Dark Lord was occupied with his own men, and the battle was quickly turning in their favour. While everyone was busy, Harry darted out of his hiding place and placed an invisibility charm over the body of his aunt and lifted her into his arms, apparating them both away to a deserted field in Surrey.

Laying his burden gently on the grass, Harry made both himself and his aunt visible again, before removing the sheet and pouring a second potion down her throat. Sitting back on his heels, Harry waited for something to happen. It wasn't long before the body in front of him started to move, and the glassy eyes sprang open. Harry immediately started chanting in the elven language, waving his hand over her head. Seconds later, her eyes cleared and her expression turned horrified.

“ How?! What?! Where?!”

“ Heather, calm down. You’re safe now.”

“ Harry?”

“ Yes, it’s me. You’re safe, Voldemort can’t get you here.”

Heather gazed around in a daze for a moment before her eyes once again rested on Harry.

“ What happened?”

“ How much do you remember?”

“ All of it,” she started, tears beginning to trail down her cheeks, “ I couldn’t stop it. He put the Imperius on me, and I tried to fight back, but there was nothing I could do. I could see myself doing those horrible things, but I couldn’t stop it.”

Harry placed his arms around the young woman as she began to sob, stroking her back and making soothing noises. When she started to calm down, their conversation began again.

“ Harry, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to spy on the Order.”

“ It’s alright, Heather. We knew from the start, and were giving you false information. I wanted to save you, but Dumbledore wouldn’t let me. He thought you would be the most use to the Order if you were feeding falsehoods to Voldemort.”

“ He left me there?! To be...raped...by that monster?”

“ I tried, I really did, Heather. You have to believe me. He wouldn’t even let me come after you once your usefulness to the Order in that respect had been compromised. He didn’t want to risk any more lives.”

“ But you saved me anyway? How...where are we? The last thing I remember is being at a battle...”

“ We’ve just come from there. I distracted Voldemort and went to get you. After knocking you unconscious, I gave you a Draught of Living Death.”

“ Clever. You made him think I was dead...”

“ Him *and* the Order. They won’t be bothering you again. Then, when no-one was looking, I apparated us to Surrey.”

“ Why Surrey?”

“ Because Petunia lives here.”

“ Petunia?! As in my sister Petunia?”

“ The very same. We need her help.”

“ Petunia won’t help *us*! She *hates* magic.”

“ I know, but this is the only place I could think to bring you. You do realise that to the wizarding world, you are dead. You have two choices from here. You can either live the rest of your life as a Muggle, or you can change your name and leave the country. Both, if possible. It would be too risky to have it any other way. I’m sorry.”

“ You have nothing to be sorry for, Harry. You’ve done a lot for me, and I don’t know how I can ever thank you. Any life I can have from now on will be better than the one I have just left behind. Even if I do chance it and go back to the wizarding world, as soon as someone sees this Dark Mark on my arm, they’ll throw me in Azkaban without a trial.”

“ About that...”

Harry gently lifted her left arm onto his lap and pulled her sleeve up, revealing the hideous tattoo. Heather winced as she caught sight of it, but watched in fascination as Harry placed his hand over it. She could feel a slight tingling as Harry muttered under his breath, and openly gaped at her companion when he removed his hand, revealing pink, unblemished skin.

“ How did you do that?!”

“ Just a little trick I picked up last year. It’s quite useful.”

“ I bet. Thank you.”

“ You’re welcome.”

“ Harry, why are you helping me? You said you argued with Dumbledore about rescuing me. But why?”

“ I just don’t like people to be enslaved...”

“ No, it’s more than that. Tell me.”

“ Well, you remember that my friends and I are from the future...”

“ Yes, you mentioned that last year.”

“ Well, let’s just say that we’re related...”

“ Related, how?”

“ I can’t say. Really. It’s a security risk. Everyone else that knew has had their memories altered, and the spell won’t be lifted until my friends and I get home. As you weren’t there, you’re the only one apart from three others that still remembers. I really don’t want to have to make you forget me. If I tell you more, though, I’ll have to. I’m sorry.”

“ I understand. So we’re related, that’s why you wanted to save me.”

“ Not that I wouldn’t have saved anyone in your situation, but I did have more of a motivation because of it.”

“ So, you know Petunia?”

“ Yes. That’s how I know she lives in Surrey.”

“ I wouldn’t have known. When she left with that boyfriend of hers, she never left a forwarding address.”



“ Well, I think we’d better get going. We should walk from here, as I don’t want our magic to be traced.”

“ I understand. Anyway, shouldn’t you be getting back to the battle? I mean, you *are* one of your best fighters...”

“ They had everything under control when I left, and they still have Ginny, Ron and ‘Mione.”

“ Are you sure?”

“ Of course. Now, let’s get going.”

As Harry strode up to the door of number 4, Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Heather following right behind him, a flood of memories nearly overwhelmed him. Although he had always thought he hadn’t been overly affected by the time travel, the emotions he felt going up to the house he had grown up in were rather strong. He had always believed he had hated the Dursleys for the way they had treated him when he was a child, but now that he hadn’t seen them in three years he realised that they were one of the few constants in his life. After a moment, it occurred to him that he had been staring blankly at the brightly painted door, and Heather was giving him a quizzical look. Harry shook his head to dismiss the memories and knocked sharply on the door. A moment later, the large form of a rather young looking Vernon Dursley pulled the door open and grinned falsely at the newcomers. When he caught sight of their disheveled appearance and wizarding robes, though, his expression turned to one of distaste.

“ Who are you, and what do you want? If you’re selling something, I’m not interested.”

Harry steeled himself and looked confidently into his uncle’s eyes.

“ We’re sorry to disturb you, Mr. Dursley, but we wish to speak to Petunia Evans.”

“ There is no Petunia Evans here.”

“ Petunia Dursley, then.”

“ And what do you want with my wife?”

“ I’m sorry, let me introduce myself. I am Harry Anguifer, and my companion is Heather Evans, Petunia’s sister. I’m afraid we’re in a bit of a pickle and need her help.”

Vernon eyed them skeptically before reluctantly moving to one side and ushering them into the living room.

“ She’s upstairs, resting. Wait here, and don’t touch anything.”

The large man vanished out of the door and Harry and Heather were left alone. Heather seemed lost in thought, and Harry was preoccupied with his former home. The living room itself looked the same as usual, with one exception. There were no photographs of Dudley gracing every surface. The room looked relatively Spartan without them. There were still the usual ornaments, but the wallpaper was different. Harry froze when he spotted the cupboard under the stairs through the gap left by the partially closed door. Both newcomers were brought out of their thoughts when Vernon and Petunia came through the door. Harry looked up at his aunt, noticing the shocked look on her face as she stared at Heather.

“ *You!* Get out of my home, *witch*.”

“ Petunia, calm down...”

“ I will *not* calm down. *Your kind* isn’t welcome in my home. You’ll contaminate it...”

“ *Contaminate* it? I seem to remember a time when *you* would have given *anything* to be one of *my kind*.”

“ Temporary madness! I am a *normal* person, and I will not have you bringing your *abnormality* into my house.”

“ Abnormality! Why, you...”

“ ENOUGH!”

Everyone looked at Harry in shocked silence. He was stood in front of them, anger on his face and a slight glow emanating from him. Vernon was staring at him in disbelief, obviously not understanding what was going on. Eventually, Petunia recovered the power of speech and pointed a shaking hand at Harry.

“ You’re one of them!”

“ Yes, I am. Now I want everyone to shut up and listen to me. Vernon?”

“ Y-yes?”

“ If you don’t understand what is going on, I suggest you ask your wife later. Basically, I am a wizard, and Petunia’s sister is a witch. Magic is real, and there is nothing you can do about it.”

Vernon gaped at the young man before turning to Petunia for confirmation. When she gave him a reluctant nod, he promptly fainted.

“ Well, that takes care of him,” Harry said, “ As for you, Petunia, you will sit down and listen to what your sister has to say.”

The horse faced woman looked cowed, and took a seat opposite her sister as Heather began to explain the situation. When she had finished, Petunia thought over everything that had been said before coming to a decision.

“ I’ll help you. But only on one condition.”

“ What?”

“ Once we are rid of you, you will never bother us again.”

“ Very well. If that’s what you want.”

“ It is. Because of you turning up, I’m going to have to explain to Vernon about witches and wizards, something I had hoped to avoid. You can stay with us until you get yourself established.”

“ Thank you, Petunia.”

Heather turned to Harry, who was watching the other woman thoughtfully. After a moment, she cleared her throat to gain his attention and gave him a smile.

“ Thank you, Harry. For everything. Look me up when you get back, alright? I'll leave my Muggle address with Petunia.”

“ I will. I'd better be getting back. The battle will be over by now, and I might be missed. It was nice to meet you, Heather, and I hope to see you in about twenty years.”

After giving his aunt a hug, Harry pulled out a portkey to Domus Corvus Corax, and disappeared from the Dursleys' living room with a slight pop.

September 1st finally rolled around, and the time travellers were running around the castle trying to get everything together before they left for Hogwarts. They were due to leave in an hour, and they still hadn't spoken to Lily and James. Harry's parents were due to portkey to Domus Corvus Corax and from there floo to Hogwarts only half an hour before they were to leave forever. Harry hadn't wanted a lot of time, because he knew it would likely be upsetting, and if he had a long time to talk to them, he would probably tell them the future and ruin everything. When the four were packed, and had checked Harry's home three times over to make sure they had everything, they flooed to Harry's secret room at Hogwarts, from where they went to the Great Hall to wait. Placing their trunks and assorted pets in the middle, they sat on their luggage and chatted about what they would do if this was the trip that took them home. Ginny and Ron had missed their family terribly, as had Hermione. Harry also confided the rescue of Heather Evans to his friends, something he had until then kept to himself. Hermione, as expected, had been horrified, but Harry soon talked her around. Before they knew it, James and Lily were walking through the doors and across the Hall towards them.

“ James! Lily! Glad you could make it,” Harry said as he jumped to his feet and gave them each a hug.

“ So are we, Harry. We’re both curious about what you have to tell us. We’ve been puzzling over it for weeks.”

“ Come and sit down, both of you. We need to talk, and I’d rather not be disturbed.”

Harry led the two over to the Gryffindor table away from Ginny, Hermione and Ron so that they could talk in private. Once they were seated, Harry gave Lily a thoughtful look before leaning across the table and placing his hand on her stomach. Both she and James sent him odd looks, especially when he started to mutter to himself. Harry felt his connection to Voldemort’s Dark Mark fracture and split as he transferred the properties of the link to Lily’s womb. He let out a small smile as he completed the spell, knowing that any child she had would be given the same control over the Dark Mark as he had gained when he gave it to Tom Riddle the year before. Earlier in the year, Harry had figured that it was the reason he had survived the attack and defeated the Dark Lord. He knew that someone with the Dark Mark was unable to kill the person who put it on them. Therefore, if the baby Harry had the power to control Voldemort’s Mark, the Dark Lord would be unable to kill him. The spell would backfire. What Harry had done was simply share the power, leaving himself still in control, as the part he had given Lily had always been present within him. Looking at the questioning eyes, he gave them a smile.

“ I’m sorry, I can’t explain. Just trust me. It’s a form of protection for any children you may have.”

“ Thanks, I think,” Lily said with a slight frown.

“ What did you want to tell us, Harry?” James asked.

Harry thought for a minute about how he wanted to phrase his explanation before starting.

“ You’ve always wondered how I seem to know a lot of stuff, and have met people you would never expect. James, you asked me about Lolide and Gaerwyn, and how I knew them so well. I’m now going to tell you.”

Harry took a deep breath before ploughing on.

“ I’m from the future. My friends and I have been travelling to different times, and in twenty minutes we will have to go home.”

Lily and James gave him a blank look.

“ You’re having us on.”

“ I’m not, James, I’m serious. This is why there has been so much secrecy surrounding us. This is how I know Lolide and Gaerwyn, as well as your parents. I met Gaerwyn when she was a young child, and I was at school with your parents. I actually introduced them.”

“ You’re not kidding? You really are from the future. Can you tell us about it?”

“ I’m sorry. You and Dumbledore are the only ones who know. I spelled everyone else to forget, so you can’t mention us to anyone, not even the other Marauders or Sev. There is one thing I need to tell you about myself, though.”

“ What’s that?” Lily asked.

“ I’m your-”

“ James, Lily, come quickly,” Dumbledore yelled as he came running through the doors. Harry gaped at him, cursing his timing.

“ What’s going on, Professor,” Harry asked the headmaster.

“ The Hogwarts express is being attacked. We need help.”

Harry nodded and started to head to the Entrance Hall when he felt a hand on his shoulder.

“ Harry, you can’t go. You need to leave in a few minutes, and you don’t have time to get there and back. You can’t risk being left here. I’m sorry.”

Harry looked mournfully at his parents as they each gave him a tight hug, before running out of the doors with Dumbledore. Harry

watched them go, tears welling in his eyes as he finished what he was going to say to them.

“ I’m your son.”

“ Harry, we have to go,” Hermione’s voice drifted into her friend’s consciousness.

“ Coming, ‘Mione.”

The pair headed over to the trunks and sat down on them, Harry pulling out the amulet and holding it in his hand. The others had given him a few moments to compose himself as he mourned the parents he would never again see alive. He was glad to have been given the chance to get to know them a little, but the fact that he now had to leave hurt him a lot. Looking at the small piece of metal in his hand that had caused all of this, he thought how small and insignificant it seemed. For the first time in over three years, since the day he had received it, he looked closely at the markings on the surface. He was lost in thought as Ginny carefully took it from his grasp, and heard the words of the spell spoken in her soft tone.

“ Tempus Vehere.”

As a flash of light surrounded the group, his eyes widened as it suddenly occurred to him what the markings meant.

## Epilogue

**\*\*\*June 1978\*\*\***

“ I can’t believe we made it. We’ve graduated!”

“ James! It’s not that unbelievable.”

“ Moony, you know more than most how much trouble we’ve been in. They should have expelled us years ago.”

“ Padfoot, they should have expelled *you* years ago. We weren’t that bad.”

“ At least we didn’t try to kill anybody...”

“ Lily, I thought we’d decided not to mention that again.”

“ Sorry, Sirius.”

“ Hey, everyone, I have something to announce.”

“ What’s that, Jamie boy?”

“ I want you all to be the first to know that Lily has agreed to be my wife.”

“ You’re kidding!”

“ Prongsie married? Never!”

“ Congrats, you two.”

\*~\*~\*

“ Severus, may I speak with you?”

“ Of course, Professor Dumbledore.”

“ I have a matter to discuss with you that is of the utmost importance. I’m sorry to interrupt your graduation celebrations, but I



was wondering what you were planning on doing now that you are no longer tied to Hogwarts.”

“ To tell you the truth, Professor, I hadn’t thought that far ahead.”

“ Well, I have a proposition for you. It has obviously come to my attention that you have passed your Potions Mastery with honours. Professor Sewell has decided to retire, and I was wondering if you would consider taking up the position of Potions Professor.”

“ Are you serious.”

“ Completely.”

“ I would be delighted, Headmaster. Thank you.”

“ You are most welcome, Severus. Welcome to the staff.”

**\*\*\*September 1979\*\*\***

“ Mr. Black, so good of you to join me.”

“ What was it you wanted to ask me about?”

“ I have been observing you over the last few months, and have come to a decision.”

“ What might that be, headmaster.”

“ As you know, you have been denied membership in the Order of the Phoenix the last six times you have applied. Now, though, I believe you are finally ready to join us.”

“ Really!?”

“ Yes.”

“ Thank you! Do you know how long I have wanted this?”

“ Since the posters came out, I believe. The summer before your sixth year.”

“ If you don’t mind me asking, Professor, why did you turn me down the other times?”

“ That is for me to know, Mr. Black, and you to wonder about. Let me just say I was following some very sound advice from a very reliable source.”

**\*\*\*July 31st 1980\*\*\***

“ JAMES POTTER! I HATE YOU!”

“ Now, now, Lily, calm down. It can’t be doing the baby any good.”

“ Damn you!”

“ Lil, it’ll be over soon. Just push for me.”

“ ...”

“ And again.”

“ ...”

“ Once more, you’re nearly there.”

“ Ahhh!”

“ Well done, love, well done.”

“ Let me just take the baby to be cleaned, James, Lily.”

“ James?”

“ Yes Lily?”

“ I’m sorry. I love you.”

“ I know, Lil, and now our family is complete.”

“ Hem hem.”

“ Oh, Poppy, can I hold my baby now?”

“ Of course, Lily. You have a beautiful baby boy, congratulations to you both.”

“ Thank you, Poppy. James, look! He has my eyes!”

“ And my hair.”

“ The poor boy.”

“ Hey! You like my hair...”

“ I’m only kidding. He’s beautiful. What are we going to call him?”

“ Eustace?”

“ No, we’ll confuse him with your father.”

“ James, after me?”

“ James Junior? No, but maybe for a middle name.”

“ I know.”

“ What?”

“ Do you remember the boy we knew in our fifth year. Strange boy, a sixth year. He got us back together after that bad break up.”

“ The time traveller? Of course! How could I forget? Wait, you don’t think...”

“ He had green eyes. And black hair.”

“ But...”

“ I think so.”

“ So it’s settled.”

“ We have a name.”

“ Harry James Potter.”

**\*\*\*August 5th 1980\*\*\***

“ Mum, Dad, I’m so glad you could come!”

“ We would have been here sooner, but we were tied up with the Order.”

“ It’s alright, Dad, I know how important it is. Lily’s upstairs, shall we go and see her?”

“ Yes, I think we should. I can’t wait to see my little grandson!”

“ Mum! I think you’re going to love him! He’s a little wonder. Our miracle.”

“ Hello, Lily.”

“ Eustace! Minh! So glad you could come.”

“ So are we. Can I hold my grandson?”

“ Of course, Minh. Let me present Harry James Potter.”

“ I’m so glad Minh and I could come and visit before we have to go.”

“ Go? Where are you going?”

“ Didn’t Albus tell you?”

“ You know what Albus is like, Dad. He never tells anyone anything, and when he does it’s always in riddles.”

“ True. Your mother and I have been talking, and we’ve decided that it’s time to go into hiding.”

“ But, you’re needed here...”

“ James, I’m sorry. I don’t want to do this any more than you do, but it has to be done. Severus got wind of one of Voldemort’s latest plans. He’s trying to track down any possible threats to his power, and our family has been placed near the top of the list. If you really

care about that baby of yours, you'd consider going into hiding as well."

" We'll think about it, but we really need to be here. We can do a lot of good with the Order still, despite our obligations as parents."

" The decision's yours, but I'm warning you. It's not safe. I suggest you come with us. We've decided to leave and go to stay with your mother's family."

" They're letting you in? I though it was only the elves that could go there?"

" Well, it's a special case. I'm not to learn anything from them, so don't get jealous. We're just going to lie low for a while."

" But, time flows differently there..."

" True, but apparently the secret to their aging is partly in their physiology, and partly in their world. While the elves age slower than us, and therefore can live for thousands of our years, I can live there and only age as much as is relative here. If I come back in ten human years, I will have aged ten years, but lived many more."

" When will you be back?"

" When I hear it's safe. You have a stone, so when the threat is over, I want you to use it to contact us. We won't be back until you do. That is, if you won't come with us."

" I'm sorry, Dad. My place is here."

" So be it."

**\*\*\*October 31st 1981\*\*\***

" James? Do you hear that?"

" Hear what?"

" There are voices coming from outside. No-one's supposed to know where we are."

“ Quick, Lily, it’s him. Take Harry and go! I’ll hold him off.”

“ I’m not leaving you, James. My place is with you.”

“ Go! I’ll be fine. I’ll see you soon.”

“ I love you, James.”

“ I love you, too. Now, run!”

**\*BANG\***

“ Ah, James Potter, so nice to see you.”

“ Pity I can’t say the same thing about you, Voldemort.”

“ Now, now, no need to be rude. All I want is you and your son.”

“ You will *never* have my son.”

“ I think I will. And soon.”

“ Why are you doing this? Why *my* family?”

“ It is simply a matter of eliminating the competition. You are, after all, of the Gryffindor bloodline.”

“ You bastard! Stupefy!”

“ Avada Kedavra.”

\*~\*~\*

“ Harry, I need you to stay very quiet. We have a bad man in the house, and we can’t let him find us.”

“ Too late, girl. I’m already here.”

“ I won’t let you hurt my son.”

“ Step aside. I have no wish to kill you. I have a different plan for you. You are, after all, an Evans.”

“ No, please, not Harry, anything-”

“ Stand aside, you silly girl.”

“ No, please, take me instead. Have mercy!”

“ I am *not* merciful. Have it your way. Avada Kedavra!”

“ Wahhhhhh!”

“ And now for you, child. I will finally have my revenge. Harry Evans, I am killing the heir of your family. I will make you suffer when I find you, if it is the last thing I do. Avada Kedavra!”

***\*BOOM\****

## The Wolf and the Pelican Timeline

01/09/1975AD The four arrive in 1975. Call Order meeting. Tell the Order about time travelling. Harry meets Heather. Feast – Harry casts mass silencing spell.

02/09/1975AD Trip to Diagon Alley. 'Tea tells Harry to move on.

03/09/1975AD Hermione, Ginny and Harry meet the Marauders.

15/09/1975AD Sev learns the Patronus charm.

16/09/1975AD Sev and Harry join the quidditch team. Harry beats Lucius in a duel.

13/10/1975AD Marauders prank Harry and Sev.

14/10/1975AD Harry and Sev retaliate.

16/10/1975AD Marauders and Lily dance the cancan at breakfast.

28/10/1975AD Ginny has a vision.

31/10/1975AD St Mungo's attacked. Ron discovers he is a healer. Harry becomes a part vampire and is in a coma.

09/11/1975AD Ron wakes up. Sev and the Marauders find out what happened.

05/12/1975AD Harry wakes from his coma.

08/12/1975AD Harry depressed – ignores everyone. Ginny tells Remus about the time travel. Remus tells her he is a werewolf.

09/12/1975AD Remus talks to Harry.

10/12/1975AD Sev finds out his animagus form – velociraptor.

11/12/1975AD Full moon – Ginny goes with Remus.

12/12/1975AD Ginny proposes the time travellers teach the Marauders the animagus transformation.



18/12/1975AD Christmas holidays start. Marauders find out their animagus forms.

25/12/1975AD Christmas Day – Harry shares it with his family.

03/01/1976AD Holidays end.

04/01/1976AD Sev shows Harry his Dark Mark – becomes a spy. Sev joins the Order of the Phoenix.

27/01/1976AD Sev's first Order meeting. Harry pranks the Slytherins – pretends to be Voldemort. Harry – vision – Prophecy of the Four.

28/01/1976AD Voldemort sends Dumbledore a howler. Harry tells Dumbledore about the vision.

18/02/1976AD Harry dreams – Heather captured as revenge against Harry 'Evans'.

27/02/1976AD Harry attacks Voldemort at a Death Eater meeting.

01/03/1976AD Marauders complete the animagus transformation.

02/03/1976AD Full moon – all go with Remus.

01/04/1976AD Marauders past and present spend the day pranking people.

03/04/1976AD Sev and Harry go to Diagon Alley. Harry gets lion tattoo. Diagon Alley attacked.

17/04/1976AD Hollerith tests completed.

18/04/1976AD Hollerith tests carried out.

22/04/1876AD Hollerith test results compiled.

23/04/1976AD Lily, James and Remus join the Order of the Phoenix.

24/04/1976AD Slytherin versus Gryffindor quidditch match.

28/04/1976AD Full moon – Sev questions Harry on where he goes.

30/04/1976AD Gaerwyn and Lolide plan James' birthday party. Harry visits Falaryth.

02/05/1976AD James' 16th birthday – told of his elven heritage.

24/05/1976AD Sirius tells Sev to go to the Whomping Willow on the full moon.,

26/05/1976AD Full moon – Whomping Willow incident.

27/05/1976AD Sirius punished – banned from playing pranks.

28/05/1976AD Lily breaks up with James.

14/06/1976AD Exams start.

03/07/1976AD Exams end.

10/07/1976AD Harry talks to James and Lily – they get back together.

12/07/1976AD Leaving Feast – the Great Prank – dress up as Voldemort and the Death Eaters. Harry asks Ginny out.

13/07/1976AD Harry tells Sev everything. Cast a charm on the students to make them forget the specifics of the time travellers. 'Tea tells Harry about his son and Lucifina.

25/08/1976AD Alder Hay Children's Hospital attacked. Heather rescued.

01/09/1976AD Harry tells James and Lily he is from the future. Hogwarts Express attacked. Four go to next time.